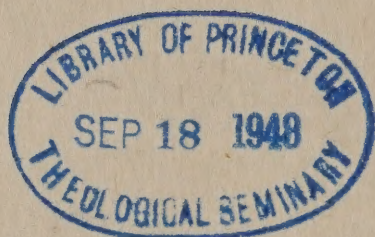
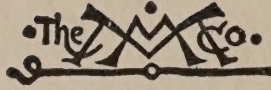


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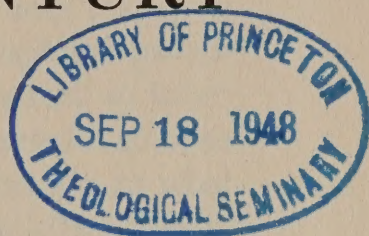
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TORONTO

AN INTRODUCTION
to JESUS for the
TWENTIETH CENTURY



By
R. W. STEWART

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INTRODUCTION

A GENERATION that finds the supreme reality in action, and accepts the new philosophical principle that theory and practice are one, must seek to interpret the life of Jesus dynamically. The essential clues to the right estimate of Jesus are to be found not in what happened to him in being born and being killed, but in what he did with all his power and will in the course of his career.

What follows is written both for those who find or might find the approach to Jesus along the traditional paths difficult and his figure obscured by what Moffatt once called "the mediæval regalia of the creeds," and for the consideration of those whose concern it is to win the allegiance of such minds for Jesus. Underlying it is the conviction that when an introduction to him has been really effected it will lead to an exaltation of Jesus in the hearts and minds of modern men as lofty and a reverence for him as profound as that which the church has tried to acknowledge and describe in its formulas and its obedience and its praise.

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I

THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION
INTO WHICH JESUS ENTERED

Judaism not at a dead end.

The vital issue was neither Temple *versus* synagogue
nor Sadducee *versus* Pharisee, but the attitude towards
the heathen.

The Old Testament attitude varied.

Apocalyptic and Hellenistic attitude genial.

Palestinian Rabbis hostile to the missionary idea.

“The people of the land” had a liberal outlook.

The great John

His Universalism.

His Diffidence.

He founds a new movement.

Jesus’ knowledge and use of Scripture.

IT is a common idea that Jesus found religion at a dead end. The hard shell of ritual in which the Jewish faith had been enclosed by Ezekiel and his priestly successors had indeed fulfilled its design to be a protective covering in a period of oppression and persecution and continual exposure to alien influences. But it is often supposed that the kernel had shrivelled in its husk, that real religion had been smothered in the tangle of technicalities woven by scribes and Pharisees, and that Judaism was a stagnant pond whose depths held no life, whose surface was unruffled by wind or wave. The long interval between the writings of the Old and New Testaments has suggested that in these centuries nothing of religious importance happened and that nothing fresh would have happened had not Jesus been born.

The truth is that Judaism had remained very much alive. Confronting the pagan world with a definite and fervent faith in one righteous God, it carried on a far-spreading missionary enterprise with a large measure of success, attracting and welcoming to its worship pious and thoughtful men and women everywhere. It placed its Scriptures in the hands of educated people in the Greek version called the Septuagint. No isolation was possible from contact with the Greek world, and contacts were both sympathetic and hostile. In the atmosphere in which Jesus grew to manhood religious ideas were in a ferment and the forces of progress and reaction in conflict. The idea that Judaism had come to a standstill and that Jesus then made a new start is quite unhistorical. The religious situation was not static, but fluid, and

contained discords that had to be resolved and issues that had to be fought out, Jesus took his place and became leader in a battle that was being waged.

One feature indeed of Jewish religion that it seems might have raised acute controversy was accepted with a strange absence of embarrassment; the fact that worship was carried on in two different ways.

To the Temple, pilgrims came in thousands to offer sacrifices, so that the place beside the Holy of holies was a vast slaughterhouse. Although prophets and Psalmists had proclaimed the futility of sacrifices and Jeremiah, whom Jews distinguished as "The great prophet," had given religion a new basis in the communion of the individual with God and the new covenant of free forgiveness, the time-honoured ritual of the altar was maintained. What the pious Jew imagined that it accomplished is very difficult to gather. The very psalms he loved to sing in the temple declared the uselessness of sacrifices to God and man. Yet he felt somehow that the continuity of the worship at the altar was one of the glories of his faith. There is no evidence that Jesus attacked the sacrificial system. He seems just to have accepted its existence while bidding worshippers at the altar see that they purified their hearts. Nevertheless, fundamentally, his thought was in agreement with Jeremiah. Though he foresaw the ruin of the Temple, he did not regard that as involving the future of real religion. The general trend of his activity was in accordance with the transfer of religious interest that was taking place from the Temple to the synagogue.

By the time of Jesus the synagogue had been for generations an established institution throughout Jewry.¹

The exact date or place or occasion of its origin is unknown. A likely guess is that it grew out of the felt need for more adequate support for their religious life than the knowledge that worship was being celebrated in far-away Zion. Synagogues, in their organisation and common worship, were very like modern churches. So largely did they come to function that they were felt necessary even in Jerusalem alongside the Temple itself. They became so thoroughly established as the organ for the expression and nourishment of the faith of Jewry that when at last the Temple crashed in flames it is hardly too much to say that Jewish religion felt no shock. Yet there never seems to have been any sense of rivalry between the synagogue and the Temple that it was superseding.

Neither did the opposition between the parties of the Sadducees and Pharisees amount to a disruptive force in Judaism. The Sadducees, worldly and lax rather than tolerant, stood for the letter of the law and no extras, and the cheapness of their motives was understood. The Pharisees aimed at warding off foreign influences and buttressing national religion by amplifying the law through a thousand additional interpretations and instructions for its exact observance. They had the credit of being in earnest, though the common man rebelled against the burdensome regulations that smothered spontaneity and encouraged hypocrisy. There was a mild theological feud between them and the Sadducees, who objected to their success in raising the doctrine of immortality to the rank of an accepted dogma. Of more significance was the agreement of both parties in dislike of the prevalent interest in Messianic hopes. These were apt to lead to political trouble, the last thing the com-

fortably situated Sadducees wanted, and their fulfilment would mean the end of the law and the system of pious routine which was the hobby of the Pharisees. The Talmud kept an almost unbroken and hostile silence on this subject in sharp contrast to Hellenistic Judaism with its speculative development of a doctrine of the Messiah as a pre-existent Divine being, the embodiment of wisdom and goodness who would overcome darkness and evil and establish the kingdom of God among men.

The vital problem that did agitate Jewish piety was the missionary duty of the nation. Differing attitudes towards the conversion of the heathen caused a cleavage far more acute than that between missionary enthusiasts and the indifferent in a modern Church. To-day the reproach is often made oratorically and listened to without evident discomfort that those who do not believe in foreign missions are not genuine Christians. In Judaism the similar accusation aroused hot feeling, and the controversy eventually broke in two the religious life of the people.

Anyone who cares to look finds the problem squarely presented by the contradictory variations of outlook in the Old Testament. One whole series of passages envisages a glorious future in which the chosen people of God will have the world at their feet. The enemies of their king will "lick the dust." After a battle in "the valley of decision," "Egypt shall be desolation, Edom a wilderness, but Judah shall abide forever." On the other hand, Isaiah assigns to Egypt and Assyria a share in the blessed future and some psalms have kindly references giving to the converted heathen a place in worship; and the whole late Book of Jonah is a fanciful story pointing

out the missionary duty of the nation to the pagan world.

The genial outlook was adopted in the apocalyptic literature which had so great a vogue in the last centuries of the old era. Salvation is said to await the elect as individuals, the national idea being left aside, and this individualism opens the way to accepting the universal scope of true religion. This is eloquently set forth in the Book of Enoch, and in other late writings the enlightenment of the heathen is pictured as happening, not by the national triumph of Israel, but in peace and goodwill. Israel is summoned to righteousness so as to shine as a light to the heathen. This was the prevailing attitude among the Hellenistic Jews of the Dispersion, and enormous numbers of Gentiles were won to the Jewish faith. Wherever there was a synagogue there were proselytes and enquirers.

The less cultured Rabbis of Palestine, however, had surrendered completely to the intense nationalist feeling that resulted from the Maccabean wars. Their temper may be gathered from their reference to the making of the Greek translation of the Scriptures as a national calamity like Aaron's making of the golden calf. To the Pharisees the notion that the heathen might be converted and crowd in and make themselves at home inside Judaism was utterly distasteful, for it opened the door to the dangers of which they went in constant fear. "Proselytes," they declared, "were a hindrance to the manifestation of the Messiah and a disease in the body of Israel." Any interest they took in conversions was in insisting, in opposition to laxer tendencies, that the convert keep every detail of the Mosaic law.

But the Pharisees were not the only religiously minded

people in Palestine. Josephus, indeed, reckons their number at no more than six thousand. There were also those to whom they referred as "the people of the land,"² whose refusal to accept Phariseeism was a source of bitter resentment. In their circles the Messianic Hope was cherished; and along with personal piety went a liberal outlook and sympathy with the missionary ideal.

It must be admitted that the exact meaning of the phrase "the people of the land" is regarded by scholars as uncertain. It is true that "the people of the land" has been taken as a vague term meaning just "the ignorant masses" or "the peasantry," but this sense is quite unsuitable in many of the references made to them. They are detestable in the Talmud, not because of their ignorance of the profounder matters of religion, but because of their deliberate neglect of the ceremonial details on which the Pharisees laid fierce emphasis. They are denounced not because they were simply ignorant or careless of the Law, but because they did not expound it in the traditional fashion, and so, while practising good works, did not observe Sabbath regulations, festivals and circumcision. This means that, even if they were not an organised sect, there existed a more or less definite way of thought and practice opposed to Pharisaism. They had their own synagogues which the Pharisees forbade people to enter, which is evidence that their worship was attractive. These synagogues, indeed, offered Jesus and the Apostles a platform for their teaching. The strict Jew was ordered not to pay tithes to their clergy and not to entertain them or frequent their society. These would have been pointless prohibitions if the objection to "the people of the land" had been merely that they were un-

couth or rude; they make it evident that the fact was that the Pharisees feared the influence of such agreeable acquaintances. Many allusions to them betray the fanatical hatred that springs from religious discords. "Stab them," said one Rabbi. "Don't you mean 'slaughter'?" asked a pupil. "No. Stab," was the answer. "Slaughtering requires a prayer." The text "Cursed be he that lieth with a beast" was applied to marriage with a daughter of one of "the people of the land." It was assuredly not snobbery but religious bigotry and a hatred for heretics that moved one Talmudist to exclaim, "As well throw a daughter to a lion as marry her to one of these."

It was not the case, then, that everyone in Jewry admitted Pharisaism to be the loftiest type of piety. There was vigorous dissent from their negative attitude to the heathen and to Messianic and apocalyptic hopes. No thoughtful person could well avoid taking a side in this cleavage affecting the outlook and activity of Judaism. Was the genial temper coming into Jewish religion through Hellenistic influences to be suppressed? Or was the essential universalism of the spiritual faith of Judah to be recognised as pointing the way to the fulfilment of Israel's destiny? The question whether Judaism should become a world religion or remain narrowly national became in this period the great religious issue. It agitated the society in which Jesus grew to manhood and the controversy went on for some time after his death. Its challenging importance first became clear in the preaching of the great John.

Who was this John, of whom Jesus said "among those born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John"? In the New Testament he makes the character-

istically sudden entry of a Hebrew prophet, "John came preaching." The Hebrews were not haunted like modern biographers by the feeling that the early surroundings and the education of a hero must be put on record. And it may be said that a claim to be a preacher makes such considerations more or less irrelevant. For preaching means the urgent proclamation of moral and spiritual truth that has a self-authenticating power in the hearer's conscience. The preacher's word is true, not because he says it, but because it is eternally or divinely right, and no proof that the preacher is by training or experience an expert can add to this authority. Subjects that education qualifies a person to teach in cold blood like mathematics, or to weigh in debate like a medical theory or an economic programme, are not themes for preaching. John came preaching; a man who, through circumstances unrecorded, had left a pious home and urban surroundings, and found some simple maintenance for himself in the wilderness, from which he emerged as an orator of astounding moral and religious power. His preaching stirred all Jewry. He was at once fervently religious and full of practical ethics. He was an independent critic of the accepted religious leaders and his popularity was so great that they dare not show hostility. His fearless candour, however, gave such offence in Court circles that Herod had him arrested and presently killed in prison.

John preached repentance. That implies that his message, like that of the ancient Hebrew prophets, was both moral and religious, a call to faith and works, to worship and ethical reform. By linking repentance with baptism, the rite by which converts were admitted to the Jewish faith, John, as the historian Josephus had the acumen

to notice, made clear that his demand was not merely for penitence for particular sins, but for the entire change of heart and mind that Hellenistic Judaism required in proselytes; the repentance which the Alexandrian theologian Philo inserted between hope and righteousness as one of the three cardinal virtues. John demanded this repentance from Jews themselves, and explicitly drew the conclusion that true religion had no racial frontiers. The evangelist Matthew reports that he met Pharisees and Sadducees with the declaration that they of all men had need to bring forth works meet for repentance. And he deliberately challenged their national outlook as an insult to God. What if they were Abraham's children? "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

John stood, therefore, decisively and unmistakably, for the outlook on religion which had been opened up in Hebrew prophecy, and with particular definiteness and emphasis in Jeremiah,³ whose language he seems to echo in his references to fiery inspiration, and the winnowing fan, and the threshing floor. Jeremiah, in a period of national disaster, had given religion a new basis in the relation of the soul to God. This conception of religion inspired the later psalmists and underlay the worship of the synagogue. It meant the end of tribalism in religion. There is one gate into the Kingdom of God for Jew and Gentile alike, said John, the gate of repentance that he symbolised in baptism. Here was the word for which the common religious sense had been waiting. No doubt what appealed most was often the way John knocked the proud and pretentious off their pedestals rather than the liberal universalist outlook that was im-

plicit in his repudiation of nationalism. Perhaps neither John nor his hearers realised the full implications of his movement, although it is to be noted that his disciples are presently found engaged in mission work overseas.

Why did John, why does any preacher preach repentance and a better way of life? The sense of vocation impels a man to speak as God's messenger or a prophet of righteousness and thus "Deliver his own soul"; but this must also mean that he has some benevolent aim in thus urgently addressing his fellows. One may say there are two possible motives, not mutually exclusive. He may hope that as the result of his preaching his hearers will repent and escape a threatened doom. Or he may hope that through obedience to his teaching they will rise above the folly and futility of their way of life, and realise the blessedness of virtue. Even if there is no fundamental difference here, there is a difference of accent. The sense that he is offering the way of escape from impending doom gives an edge and sometimes a harshness to a preacher's words. The sense that he speaks of principles that must always condition the attainment of man's highest destiny may turn preaching into profound and practical ethical teaching. John gave such instruction to those who asked for it: Charity is for all, honesty is needful in tax-gatherers, discipline and contentment in a soldier. But in the main John's thought is of imminent judgment. The wheat will be gathered into the garner, but the chaff burnt with unquenchable fire. The time is at hand. Salvation depends on repentance.

A particular feature of John's preaching was his sense that the time was not fully ripe and his confession of his own insufficiency for the work. His conviction was that

the kingdom was at hand, not that it was there; or that he had the capacity to inaugurate it. Some other, stronger, fierier, holier, would be required, and was surely near. The hour would bring the man. Many a preacher and reformer has felt exactly thus. The New Testament accepts this diffidence on John's part as belonging to his role as forerunner of the Christ, and his humility and readiness to step aside is admired. This opinion is natural in the light of after events. A simpler explanation is that even in John there was a streak of that timidity or faithlessness that makes caution or calculation or modesty an excuse for not making a start at once, but preferring to wait, saying, "Time is on our side."

The four Gospel narratives view John as the precursor of Jesus. Three references, however, establish the fact that his movement was in and by itself an outstanding factor in Jewish history. One is in the mouth of Jesus himself. When challenged about the basis of his own authority, he silenced the questioners by a counter-challenge to define the authority of John. This riposte would have had no decisive effect if John were regarded just as the herald of Jesus' own mission. The point of it was that it appealed to another case outside the controversy, to John to whom none, whatever they thought of Jesus, dared deny the highest kind of authority. It was a recognition by Jesus that, apart from anything that had to do with himself, John was an example of what real "authority" meant.

Another reference is found in Josephus. He tells that in A.D. 36 popular opinion among the Jews ascribed a defeat of the army of Herod the Tetrarch to the wrath

of God at the murder of the Baptist. John evidently occupied the mind of the Jewish people and of Josephus for his own sake and not in virtue of any relation to Jesus.

A third reference comes in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, where it is recorded that, twenty years after the Crucifixion, Christian preachers found themselves treading on the heels of preachers of John's baptism. Of one, Apollos, it is said that "he had been instructed in the way of the Lord" and that "he taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John." Others are referred to as "disciples" who "believed."

The fact that these men were not regarded as requiring any conversion, but only fuller instruction, means that the Christian preachers found a religious movement and mission derived from John which they could not in principle differentiate from the Christian gospel. Calling for repentance, and taking the world for its parish, a new missionary Judaism was at work which acknowledged John as its prophet.

To this account of the religious situation into which Jesus arrived has to be added the fact that his mind was nourished on the literature of his nation. His language shows an intimate acquaintance with nature, and as he grew to manhood he had all the opportunities of the village carpenter to study human nature at close range. But also one gathers from Luke that he was a studious boy, and the educational facilities even at Nazareth would be considerable. There was no barrier to his acquiring that intimate knowledge he possessed of Hebrew literature: a literature of unexampled range including writ-

ings as diverse in type as Acts of Parliament, Shakespeare, Milton, Macaulay, Browning and Blake, pages literal as the Ten Commandments, others poetic, speculative, inspiring rather than dogmatic, obscure as well as profound. Jesus quoted law as final authority. He also picked and chose in prophetic writings as people do in the works of a poet. He used old phrases and images as ready-made counters to express his own thought. He gave interpretations that were flashes of original insight, and some that amounted to deliberate rejections of accepted meanings. To one category belong the quotations that come from the Mosaic law in the story of his temptation in the wilderness. Each assault of the Tempter is repelled by an unanswerable, "It is written." At other times he uses the Old Testament as a storehouse of familiar illustrations, as in the allusion to "Solomon in all his glory," to the preaching of Jonah, and to the destruction of Gomorrah. He could also apply the current Jewish methods of exegesis with startling and triumphant brilliance as in the proof of immortality from the phrase, "I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Even to the Law he brought originality of interpretation extending murder to cover hatred, and adultery to cover lust, and throwing overboard the measure of vengeance in favour of a new rule of forgiveness and love.

In all this the impression is of a free spirit brooding over a literature rather than of a pundit word perfect in his text; and this impression is deepened when his use of the prophetic and apocalyptic books is considered. The reference to Jonah in the whale's belly is a half-whimsical literary allusion; the wholly serious, deeply

considered use of Jeremiah's words about the New Covenant opens a door into the way his mind was influenced by the greatest of the prophets; the adoption of the phrase "Son of man," with its dreamy yet magnificent associations, shows Jesus exploring the realms of fantasy in search of imagery to convey his truth. Especially in connection with the prophetic ideals commonly grouped loosely as Messianic, Jesus' mind is seen selecting, rejecting, combining and modifying older notions and in the end, while profoundly influenced by the literature, presenting with complete freedom a conception of his own. Jesus thus entered upon his career with a mind steeped in Hebrew literature. He could rest on its authority. He could interpret it as a master-critic. He was familiar with its by-paths. It furnished him with suggestions. It raised for him problems. It nourished his faith.

A movement, a hero, a literature, these were the three large factors that entered into the life of the youthful Jesus in addition to the influence of his home and the practice of his craft, the social environments of village life, and the love of natural beauty. And above and in all he seems never to have been without a serene and untroubled sense of communion with God, his heavenly Father.

NOTES

General reference may be made to:

Bousset. *Die Religion des Judentums*. 1926.

Schürer. *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*. 1901.

G. F. Moore. *Judaism*. 1927.

Friedländer. *Die Religiöse Bewegungen innerhalb des Judentums im Zeitalter Jesu*. 1003.

Klausner. *Jesus of Nazareth*. 1929.

1. The article on the Synagogue in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* gathers the known facts.

2. D. Friedländer. *Die Religiöse Bewegungen*, pp. 78-84. In Jackson and Lake's *Beginnings of Christianity* it is said that the question about the "people of the land" is "intensely important, but obscure" Vol. I (p. 72). The view taken here is opposed in an appendix by Moore (p. 439). Against his contention that the phrase is an expression of the academic snobbishness of the religiously educated, or the fastidiousness of the socially refined may be urged his own statements that the "people of the land" had their own synagogues, that they were not necessarily of the lowest social class, and that one who knew the teaching of the schools might give up study and belong to the "people of the land."

3. See pp. 75 ff.

II

THE OPENING OF JESUS' CAREER

Jesus' attitude to John.

Jesus' "Temptations."

Jesus takes over the leadership of the movement.

The new note of his preaching.

The Kingdom present.

No waiting for Another.

Preaching became teaching too.

The early ministry was sincerely hopeful.

JESUS' first public activity in the religious ferment of his time was as an acknowledged adherent of the movement begun by John. To any observer he was a young artisan, about thirty years old, mainstay of a pious, widowed mother. His lofty character and religious fervour so impressed John at their meeting that with a seriousness perhaps whimsical rather than solemn, John met his request for baptism with the expostulation that he was the better fitted of the two to bestow the rite, and then watched with equanimity one and another of his disciples detach themselves from himself to follow Jesus. This and other parts of the Gospel narrative show the natural Christian interest in the question, what was John's attitude to Jesus? An answer to the other question, What was Jesus' attitude to John and his movement? is more important for the understanding of the opening of Jesus' career.

Jesus looked to John with enthusiastic admiration. Speaking of him, he broke into poetry:

"What went ye out into the fields to see?

A reed shaken in the wind?

A prophet and more than a prophet.

He was that burning and shining light."

This is the language of hero-worship. It rings with personal feeling, as from one who had received, through John, a profound inspiration and impulse. Jesus had felt the flame of his personality and had a debt to acknowledge with gratitude and pride.

Part of this debt is plain to any reader of the New

Testament, which records that Jesus took many phrases from John's lips over into his own preaching. "Ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape judgment?" "The tree is known by its fruit." "If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the work of Abraham." These words are all echoes of those of the Baptist.

To John's movement, Jesus' attitude was not only allegiance, in offering himself for baptism, but service. The Fourth Gospel makes a deliberate correction of the earlier evangelists which only a writer with assured knowledge would have ventured to make when he notes that Jesus, and the disciples whom he had at once attracted, began to preach and baptise before John was cast into prison. This was no rival movement, but an expansion of John's. Yet it would appear that Jesus was from the outset conscious that he had a distinctive note to strike and that their relations required tactful handling.

Jesus' baptism and adherence to John's movement and recognition that it had a right to his active co-operation marked a climax or crisis in his life, and brought him to a decisive review of the lines of his future course. The quiet years that he had passed, content with or tied by circumstances to manual toil, had been, all the same, years of profound thought and keen observation. He sensed now that it was not enough for him to give John occasional help or support. Religion was to be his own whole concern and life-work. To arrive at a sure and settled programme for himself required a period of lonely meditation and self-examination and prayer. Jesus sought this in the wilderness whence John had come; and his own account of what passed through his

mind, and of the convictions and governing principles at which he arrived, was afterwards given to his disciples in the form of the story of His Temptation.

It is the story of the careful examination into the conditions of right effort which Jesus undertook when he felt the urge to public activity, and it discloses that his temptations were such as beset everyone who feels called upon to influence others. Since "no man liveth to himself," they are in some measure everyman's temptations.

The first temptation was to aim at meeting the pressure of physical needs. It may have had its personal bearing. Why should one dedicated to a great religious task not have secured to him at least plain fare? "Command that these stones be made bread." But it would surely be an error to think that Jesus thought only or chiefly of his own comfort. The world then as now contained multitudes of miserable folk, poor, hungry, cheerless. It would be a great thing just to feed them. "*Panem et circenses*," "the Dole and the flicks," says sarcastic Juvenal, are all the populace wants. But no one need sneer at the desire for food and a little pleasure. It is not too much for anyone to ask and one can imagine how greatly Jesus' compassionate heart longed to give this. One of his most famous parables teaches that men are on right lines who feed the hungry and clothe the naked. What greater thing is there to hope to do for any starving human being than to "make these stones bread"? What demonstration could be so winning, so convincing as to prove that true religion will make everyone well fed and happy!

The answer to this temptation is not so swift and decisive as the retort "man shall not live by bread alone"

may suggest. That word sums up the results of forty days and nights of hard thought and earnest prayer; nor will the principle which it lays down automatically decide each concrete case. Did not Jesus himself on occasion feed the multitude? Is it ever quite easy to maintain the distinction, or determine the priority, between material and spiritual requirements? Religion must neither underestimate the economic factor nor cheapen itself to an affair of "loaves and fishes." Jesus reached not a rule or code, but a principle, to be used like a compass as each emergency confronts the steersman. The spiritual needs of man are his largest and deepest. Every brotherly effort of helpfulness must be inspired and guided by the truth that "man does not live by bread alone."

The second temptation was sensationalism. Jesus pictured himself standing with the Devil on the temple roof and tempted by the suggestion to jump from its pinnacle. This stands, in modern phraseology, for any "stunt" to secure publicity. To influence men Jesus must attract interest and attention. Should he stake everything on one throw; daring all and commandeering God's support? Jesus' answer was that no one may force God's hand or impatiently, and out of the line of duty, challenge the patience of God. "Thou shall not put to a test the Lord Thy God." This is Jesus' conclusion about sensational methods, and about the idea that men can ever say they have taken the risk and done their part, and can therefore challenge God to do His. The only way of duty is the way of love and service and in it a man must walk with patience to the end.

There is a real and standing issue between the love of slogans and advertisement and spectacular daring and

the preference for ways of preparation and patience and quiet persistence until results come. The principle may be clear, but the right application of it in varying circumstances is part of the difficult art of living. When is it right to dare all in faith? When does the situation indicate that God's will demands prudence? Jesus at times was utterly daring, and in the end took a road that led straight to doom. But also at times he took evasive action and he was the patient teacher, bent, not on stampeding, but on persuading men.

The third temptation was compromise. "Give the devil his due." Admit that there is something in the power of evil that may be used for good ends. A small concession may seem to guarantee enormous results. But "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve."

Compromise was the religious fashion in Jesus' time. The martyrs were peculiar people who refused easy ways of accommodation. The suggestion may indeed always be made that those who are most accommodating will achieve most real good. It is a vain delusion. There must be no tolerance for anything evil, and no attempt to use any method which is recognisable as devilish.

The event which brought Jesus definitely to the forefront was the arrest and imprisonment of John. Whether the explanation of his long obscurity and his somewhat tentative activity in Judea had been the restraint of family obligations, or the modesty of genius, or feelings of deference towards John, the fact stands out that when the hour of danger came he dashed to the vacant post, and assumed responsibility ¹ for the continuance of the movement that was stirring the whole land. At the same

time it was quickly obvious that there was a new note in his preaching and a different accent. He himself was well aware of it, for he compared his message to new cloth that would not patch an old garment, to new wine that old bottles could not hold, and thus defended the gaiety of his disciples when it was unfavourably contrasted with the solemnity of those of John.

The call to repentance, indeed, and the use, at the first at least, of the symbol of baptism, establish a broad continuity between Jesus and John. But the new note was struck in Jesus' insistence that "the kingdom" was already there. It was in his own heart. In his own experience he knew the reign of God. A paraphrase of the hundred and fourth Psalm runs:

*"His bountiful care what tongue can recite.
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light.
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain
And sweetly distils in the dew and the rain."*

Such was Jesus' outlook on Nature.

A modern poet, Ralph Hodgson, writes of those who—

*"view the world with pity and pride
And warm to all mankind."*

This too was true of Jesus. When he put his loftiest teaching into poetic form declaring the possessors of one virtue after another blessed he was not merely giving a list of unrealisable ideals, he was declaring that, as he looked at life, he saw real people who were thus to be congratulated, people who in some degree at least were humble, teachable, creators of peace, eager for righteousness. The reign of God was not round the corner, or

coming to-morrow; it was there in such men's hearts.

So the harshness of John's apocalyptic utterances was softened. Jesus, it has been said, was his own apocalypse. Where he was, in his company, in those who shared his spirit, the Kingdom was realised.

In accordance with this outlook, Jesus dropped out of the message of the movement all reference to Another who was yet to come. There was no need to wait for the future and for someone else. This did not mean that to begin with he realised that he himself was cast for a decisive personal role in the movement, but was at first burdened simply with the message of the Kingdom, on entering into which tears of penitence quickly became tears of joy.

A further consequence of this different outlook was that in Jesus' speech the difference between preaching and teaching tends to disappear. Some modern theologians, depreciating reason and evaluating the Gospels as propagandist literature, urge that preaching and teaching are two distinct activities, and that preaching is purely telling the good news. This line of argument is not supported by the example of Jesus, who said, "Hear me, all of you and understand." His preaching was teaching too. While many people would rather be told than taught, and one can tell the time, or dates in history or how to spell, there are other things, like mathematics or grammar even, and still more important matters, which have to be explained rather than urged. And when it is a question of the verities of the eternal Kingdom, which even now interpenetrate life in time, the truth has both to be urged and made clear. So for Jesus the proclamation of the gospel tended to pass into in-

struction about the ethical principles inspiring the life of those who enter the Kingdom. He demands repentance and at the same time offers the "Golden Rule."

In his teaching, Jesus took the opposite method from Socrates, who asked question after question till his listeners had to admit their ignorance, Jesus made men realise how much they knew. When he said, "Fear not them that can kill the body, and afterward have no more that they can do," and "Not what goes into a man but what comes out of his heart defiles him," and "Love is the fulfilling of the law," the effect was not to make men feel that these were strange and difficult truths that they could never have discovered, but rather to make them aware that these were simple and obvious truths that they had always known if they had only stopped to think. To note this is not to deny the originality of Jesus any more than to point out the direct ease of "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" is to belittle Shakespeare's genius. Jesus' plain little story about the good Samaritan started mankind on a new broad road of charity; and the Parable of the Lost Sheep, almost childlike in its simplicity, immediately put all the world's religions out of date.

It is essential to any understanding of Jesus' career to give full regard to the absolute sincerity of the hopefulness and earnestness of the first Galilean ministry. It was not a mere demonstration, or preliminary manœuvring for position, in view of the struggle to come, nor a formal deployment of the truth of his teaching and the grace of his character that might be a basis for later claims, nor an aimless shooting into the air of words whose music made them immortal. When Jesus preached to men and women in Galilee, it meant that he believed

it was worth-while preaching and worth-while for them to listen and that he was hopeful about the result. Renan, in spite of his frivolity and sentimentalism, has in some sentences of *Vie de Jesus* captured more truly than most others the atmosphere of Jesus' early ministry. "The youthful band lead a joyous and wandering life. . . . At each step, in the passing cloud, the germinating seed, the ripening corn, they saw signs of the Kingdom drawing nigh. . . . His preaching was gentle and pleasing, breathing Nature and the perfume of the fields. He loved flowers and took from them his most charming lessons. The birds of heaven, the sea, the mountains, and the games of children furnished in turn the subject of his instructions." Never, it is a common judgment, has that atmosphere been so closely reproduced as when St. Francis of Assisi and his gay companions in poverty moved up and down in Italy preaching the Gospel and tending the sick. No part of the Gospel story, said the author of that poetic diatessaron called "He is become my Song," was so easy to render into verse as the reports of the early preaching in Galilee.

The substance of this first preaching and teaching has been gathered together in the chapters of Matthew known as the Sermon on the Mount. The material may have been delivered on various occasions or often, for it was Jesus' habit to seize opportunities as they came. Nor is it to be supposed that all these sayings, aphorisms, parables, couched in poetic language, and framed in perfect style, were sudden improvisations. Jesus loved storytelling, and was a master of form. The words he used, like his thoughts, may have been long pondered. One thing needs to be emphasised. The notion that crops up

every now and again that the Sermon on the Mount is a simple artless uncontroversial statement of morality with no theology in it, is utterly mistaken. The very first word is "blessed," not "happy." The reason why Jesus counts the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the merciful blessed is that the inspiration and hope of their lives is religious. Daily life is to have a religious basis. "Be not anxious for the morrow" he says, and the reason for being care-free is that God cares. "Love your enemies. Pray for them that persecute you"; the reason is that God the Father is merciful and so must his children be.

NOTE

1. "The sweep of that great tide of faith in God which made the religion that we own was driven by no earth-born power. The impulse was from heaven. Jesus took over its leadership and interpretation from one who was a prophet indeed and more than a prophet. He carried it to a higher and yet higher level. Not in obedience to his own design but as confessedly and consciously acting for God." Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, 192 (p. 51).

III

JESUS' ACTIVITY, AND THE ALIENATION OF THE PHARISEES

Jesus' independence.

His equipment.

His stress on his message.

His hopefulness.

The difficulty of outlining any plan he had.

Features of his work:

Preaching.

Personal intercourse.

Healing.

Spontaneity.

The alienation of the Pharisees:

By missionary interest.

By friendliness towards the outcast.

Especially by breaking with the law.

Why this last controversy was not pressed.

JESUS' plan for his life was no free choice of his own. He felt himself divinely called to carry forward the movement John had begun. He undertook the dangerous work, however, not as a pupil bound by a master's instructions, but as one who saw that this movement claimed something he had himself to bring to it and that he could carry into it the convictions at which he had arrived by his own judgment.

In the carpenter's shop, a place of gossip, like any village smithy, the place to which mourners would come to order a bier or borrow a plank that would serve, he had unrivalled opportunity to observe the intimate life of a community. By long study, he had made himself master of the Hebrew scriptures and drawn from them the conception of the Kingdom of God as His reign in human hearts, and the conviction that its dynamic is suffering love. Because in his own life he had the full sense of this Divine governance, he was able to declare that the kingdom was here and now, if men would only receive it. In addition to this ripe experience and reflection, Jesus must have been aware of his gift of speech. His first public utterances were not the efforts of an unpractised tongue. He must have found out long before that he could tell a story, and hold hearers in his spell. To preach, then, and to teach was what he felt called and able to do. He would utter the decisive word amid the dissensions of Judaism by proclaiming that its culmination was in the reign of God in the heart of every man, and the proclamation of this gospel to all the world.

It is the authentic memory of his first campaign that

Jesus came as one with the joy of a great discovery in his heart, eagerly and hopefully announcing it, and with apparently large success. Here was the cure alike for the irks and ills of ordinary life, and for the cursed politics of hatred that were driving towards a ruinous breach with Rome, and for the pride that kept the nation from throwing its soul into the missionary task which was the true destiny of their race. Jesus says nothing to begin with about himself. He puts the whole weight on his message. It did not require his own voice to give it. He did not contemplate carrying on a single-handed mission. How real and hopeful the prospect of success was to him is clearly seen in his invitation to the fishermen who became disciples: "Come and I will make you fishers of men." The early programme was for a team of fellow-workers. His disciples went on tour, and returned reporting success. There is a feeling of reality and hope in all this. The preaching was good news without threatenings; its subject was not an apocalyptic climax, but a kingdom that had come.

If this utilisation of the disciple band seems to have been an experiment not developed, the reason that seems sufficient was that it was quickly evident that they almost entirely failed to enter into the spirit of their master. Disciples who were ready to call down fire from heaven upon an inhospitable village, and tried to ward off the approach of children or the blind, were hardly qualified to be his assistants. Jesus began to devote time to their training, and he was still teaching them, rather than using them, when he died.

It is often overlooked by Christian writers that the full recognition of the serious intention, the reality and

purpose of Jesus' early preaching forces a decisive rejection of the idea that from the beginning he conceived himself to be the Messiah whose vocation was to be a martyr. One filled with a consciousness that doom was his destiny could not have thrown himself with this hopefulness into the work of a religious revival the success of which would change every condition of the time. Nor does the timeless element in his rich ethical teaching, and the way he not only preached but taught and laid down the rule of life in a form adapted for remembrance and for study, leave room for the idea that his dominating thought was that he would presently appear from heaven in glory and power to make an end of the present age.

What then were the lines on which Jesus proposed to work? Two considerations limit the possibility of any complete answer. One is that any scheme of propaganda requires time to take shape and unfold itself, and events moved too quickly for the development of any long-term planning. The other is that, even for the short period that was to be available, little exact knowledge about the historical, or geographical, or even logical order of the course of Jesus' activities can be gained from the Gospel records. The interest they have is in reporting that certain things were said or done on various occasions which they describe often vividly enough. It is a baffling task to arrange as a biographer would wish the material thus preserved. The New Testament writers and editors are not interested in the questions with which he wishes to deal. In telling the story of some event, or incorporating into his narrative some account of it already familiar in a definite form, they are not concerned to date or place

it with any exactitude. The point was just that here was something memorable that Jesus once did or said. His going to and fro in Galilee are vaguely indicated in references to following crowds, and attempts to escape their pressure. The evangelists are not clear or always in agreement as to Jesus' motive for moving to one place or another, and readers are left uncertain about the total period covered by their narratives. The difficulties raised by the order or lack of order in these records has produced a vast bulk of literature which closely examines the evidence that may be found there for the historical course of events, and every incident, every saying, that taken separately, makes its own contribution to the understanding of Jesus has been the subject of ceaseless study and reflection that shows no sign of exhausting the theme.

Still, certain general remarks about the lines along which Jesus proceeded are possible. First, he threw himself into the work of preaching and teaching. He found opportunities in the synagogues, in the market-place, in the open field. He must have had a golden voice that could reach a vast concourse. He held hearers spell-bound and produced on them a profound impression of authority. His appeal was at once to heart and mind. The lesson about God's love in his parable of the shepherd who sought the one sheep missing in a hundred, and the lesson about man's love in the parable of the Good Samaritan were appeals to the heart. But when he said, "Hear me all of you and understand," and when he commented on human motive and denounced inconsistency and hypocrisy he appeals to intellect and common sense. Excited nonsense that has been talked in disparagement

of human reason has no support in Jesus' words. Because he believed that men could respond to sheer truth, preaching could with him pass into teaching; and indeed it was patient teaching of a small band of disciples, dull and prone to misunderstand, that more and more came to occupy him.

Second, Jesus laid himself out to make contact with all sorts and conditions of men. By the wayside, in the market-place he found access to individuals, showing the over-flowing kindness and sympathy of his nature. The reign of God that he proclaimed was not a political programme nor even a public religious revolution; it was within the heart of each individual, and in the least expected quarters the germ of it lay dormant, but ready to awake to life. He found that tax-gatherers, sinners, children, harlots needed but a word, a smile, a welcome to be gathered into the kingdom. Thus, with the most penetrating analysis of the evil of the human heart Jesus combined the most amazing belief in the possibilities of human nature, despairing of none, hopeful of the most degraded and forlorn. And the very universality of his message made him ready to concentrate his whole attention on one individual at a time and put all his wisdom and moral power at the service of a personal case.

Thirdly, Jesus discovered in himself a power of healing which gave a crowning touch to his popularity and displayed his tender compassion. For long this was accepted as evidence of a sheerly miraculous gift. Then came a period when scientific medicine made people sceptical of the whole tradition regarding Jesus' cures. It is only in recent years that modern observation of the interaction of mind and body in disease has made it

possible to use the clue offered by the Gospel tradition that faith in Jesus' power was involved somehow in the cures and to regard without undue scepticism if with reservation the record of Jesus' healing ministry.

Fourthly, the absence of a clear outline of any exact programme throws into relief the continual spontaneity of Jesus' activity. At every moment in the stream of casual events he was ready with the appropriate word to say, the inevitable thing to do. He has spent weeks wrestling with temptation in the wilderness, he continued to snatch night hours for prayer; but in the throng and press of daily affairs he never showed perplexity or hesitation. He promptly adjusted himself to each situation as it arose and was master of every event. When John was cast into prison, he stepped forward to preach. When a crowd gathered he addressed it. When a blind beggar called as he hastened along the road, he stopped and worked a miracle. He spent himself in incessant labour, yet he had infinite leisure for each case. He was perpetually enriching intercourse by extra touches of grace, not according to any plan but like the improvisations of a master musician. Thus his life, apart from anything he effected, remains a lesson in the art of life, for which he said there were no rules unless these, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," and "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another."

As the dominating party of those in Judea really in earnest about religion, the Pharisees ought to have been the natural allies of Jesus. They had made approaches to John, though he gave them scant welcome. They showed a close interest in Jesus. One of them, Nicodemus, visited

him by night seeking to fathom his message. Another, Simon, bolder if less respectful, invited him to dinner in his house. Certain others once passed a friendly warning to him that Herod meant to kill him. It must have made a large difference to the history of the movement if the Pharisees had been drawn into it. What actually happened was their complete alienation, and much of the Gospel narratives is a record of ways in which they took offence.

Ground for this had already been given by John when he denounced the religious claim they built on nationality, as being Abraham's children, and thus threw his whole weight on the side of those who felt that Judaism had a welcome for proselytes. It can be gathered from Jesus' choice of references in the Old Testament that he was in full accord on this point with John. There is no record of him alluding to many of the most famous events of Hebrew history, yet all these incidents involving foreigners are touched upon in the course of his teaching; the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, the feeding of Elijah by a widow of Zarephath, the healing of Naaman the Syrian, and the tale of the preaching of Jonah to Nineveh. This interest of Jesus in Gentiles, this deft use, on the lines of their own Rabbinic exegesis, of the kindly attitude to foreigners that was incontrovertibly to be found in the scriptures, was exasperating to the Pharisees. Was Jonah then a model prophet? Were such dubious people as the Queen of Sheba and Naaman types of true piety? Proselytising was in the eyes of the Pharisees an anxious undertaking to be done very carefully if indeed it should be done at all. Jesus' proclamation of the Fatherhood of God was making proselytising

meaningless. Blessings like his beatitudes were hedged by no restrictions. They were the code of a religious personal, and spiritual, and universal. Jesus' most pointed interest in the Temple was not in its sacrifices, but in keeping its outer courts quiet as a place in which Gentiles could pray. He set the missionary idea in the forefront of his programme when he said, "Come, I will make you fishers of men." And the kingdom was to grow by quiet penetration, like leaven. Its members were to influence others by doing good even to enemies. It would be filled by those coming from north, south, east and west, but not necessarily by Jews.

As Jesus' ideas about the Gentiles angered the Pharisees, so his habit of friendly intercourse with "publicans and sinners" outraged their sense of religious propriety. Such friendliness seemed to them to give away the dignity of the godly way of Life. These matters revealed a very considerable gulf between the Pharisees and Jesus, though one that might have been crossed. Some of them found the barrier not altogether impassable. What made an unbridgable chasm was Jesus' attitude to the law. This law was to the Pharisees the bulwark of Judaism. Their doctrine was that the law was a complete system, with Divine sanction in every part. No discrimination was to be thought of between what might be called moral and what was ceremonial; what was fundamental involving principle, and what was mere technicality. If any vagueness was felt anywhere in the law, or difficulty in observing it the remedy was not to fall back upon the governing principle for light and guidance, but to draw out by skilled interpretation all the detail that was required. Indeed, there was hardly any limit to what could

be extracted from the text by close examination and ingenuity, by drawing analogies and making combinations, by interpreting letters of a word as figures or as initials of a sentence, or by transposing them as if they were an anagram. The result was to attach to piety an enormous mass of rules and regulations, each invested with all the solemn authority of the law, and to make the religious life more and more a matter of legal technicalities.

It was not, of course, everyone who was really impressed by such requirements. There were the careless and easy-going; and even worthy people, busy with other concerns, had not always time or interest to spare for matters that common sense could not invest with real importance. The Pharisee, by his teaching and by his conspicuous example in daily life, set himself to rebuke such slackness, and as a stalwart of the faith he commanded respect rather than liking.

In particular, the Pharisees focused attention on the law of the Sabbath, in quite the spirit of English and Scots sabbatarians who expand the rule "Thou shalt do no work" to mean also "Thou shalt play no game." Originally, in a primitive agricultural and slave-owning community, the Sabbath commandment was the first labour legislation. It secured a free day, not only for worship, but from work, for servants and slaves. It meant a cheerful break for the hard-driven in their round of toil, a holiday as well as a holy day. Jewish tradition never got away from the idea that it should be marked by good food, but the early stress on abstention from work, not from play, was forgotten by the Pharisee as it is by the modern sabbatarian who travels cheerfully to church in

public conveyances and enjoys fresh-cooked meats afterwards, but pursues with censures those who spend any part of the day in athletic sports.

By keeping the Sabbath law, a Jew openly affirmed his nationality in a heathen world, so that as a racial custom the Sabbath had the sanction, not only of religion, but of patriotic sentiment. It was a law, too, of which breaches could be easily detected without close spying; any man's neighbours were bound to know, more or less, what he did, or did not do, on the Sabbath day. As in times not now very far behind, the strictness of a man's Sabbath-keeping was taken as the barometer of his religious altitude. The rules and regulations that were set forth were almost incredibly absurd in their detail. Food might be taken, but not medicine. A beast might not be lifted out of a hole, but one might throw down planks by which it could climb out itself. A walk might be taken, but not for more than two miles.

It came therefore as an intolerable shock to the Pharisees to find that Jesus made no attempt whatever to keep the Sabbath on their elaborate lines and that when challenged he was ready out of their own scriptures to confound them. Though there was a regulation that a modern doctor might think not unreasonable, to the effect that medical advice should not be sought on that day unless delay involved danger, Jesus healed chronic cases of long standing on the Sabbath, and without embarrassment answered critics with the aphorism: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Against the importance of the utmost meticulous observance he appealed to the common sense and good-heartedness that must decide against any delay in helping beasts and, *a*

fortiori, men and women. At another time by an adroit and challenging appeal to Old Testament story he held them up to scorn. In their carping way, they had complained that, because his disciples had plucked ears of corn and rubbed out the kernels to eat as they passed along a cornfield, they had worked and thus broken the commandment. So undoubtedly they had by Pharisee standards. But, and surely with breezy humour, he flung back at them the question: "Have ye not read what David did?" David, who broke the law that his hungry soldiers might be fed. Jesus holds up David, the accepted pattern of a pious and glorious monarch, as an example, not of knowing how to keep the law, but of knowing when to brush it aside. The Pharisees were bound to be infuriated by such a repartee. They could not but see, what others in modern times have been strangely reluctant to see, that Jesus threw the whole orthodox Jewish conception of the law overboard as false and worthless.

The modern Jewish scholar Klausner holds that the opposition of the Pharisees to Jesus was essentially sound. "Jesus thrust aside all the requirements of the national life," setting up instead "an ethico-religious system bound up with his conception of the God head. . . . Two thousand years of non-Jewish Christianity have proved that the Jewish people did not err. Both the instinct for national self-preservation and the cleaving to the great humanitarian ideal demanded that Judaism reject this ethical teaching, severed as it was from national life." Klausner thinks that the "humanitarian ideal" of Judaism, if apparently less lofty, had the advantage of being practical. He seems to forget that,

judged by political results, the Pharasaic policy of national self-preservation was a failure. The way Jesus pointed might have averted the destruction of the nation.

Thus it came about that the Pharisees were completely alienated. At the same time, it is curious that, according to the Gospel record, the antagonists never quite come to grips on the fundamental issue involved. Jesus puts the Pharisees out of court on the ground of their hypocrisy, finding ample support in notorious fact and in popular sympathy, for the Pharisees too had their detractors. They, on their part, criticised him on technical points. The impression that the controversy was not pressed to a point may be due to failure on the part of the evangelists to appreciate its significance and give an adequate report. The Book of Acts makes it clear that it took the early Christians a long time to realise how deep was the cleft between them and national Judaism. But it may rather have been that neither side forced this issue because neither was aiming at a party victory nor a cleavage in the nation. Both Jesus and the Pharisees claimed to be in possession of the one site on which alone an undivided Judaism could build its future.

In face of the popular admiration for Jesus the hostility of the Pharisees was of no great account. There is a note of disappointment in the reproaches Jesus levelled at them. But a time was not distant when their friendship might have made some defence against the burst of anger and fear which moved the Jewish plutocracy to compass his death.

IV

JESUS' SENSE OF HIS PERSONAL FUNCTION IN THE MOVEMENT

Jesus' thought about himself concerned his function. Such meditation was at a second stage in his career. He was aware of special features of his own experience. His relation of his function to terms in Hebrew philosophy.

This did not amount to a theological doctrine about himself.

His premonition that his time was short.

THREE sayings that are self-estimates have become famous. There is the intolerable arrogance of Louis XIV's "*L'Etat, c'est moi*"; there is the utter self-abnegation expressed in Kipling's line, "Who dies if England lives?"; and somewhere between them in sentiment is Dante's query, who, when there was question of sending an ambassador to represent his beloved Florence, asked, "If I go, who stays, and if I stay, who goes?" Dante's words are tinged no doubt with haughty scorn for his fellow councillors, yet they are rescued from egoism by their intense and fiery concentration on the function he had to perform. What was Jesus' thought about his own personality?

It would seem that as time went on he meditated more and more about the bearing on his own career of the prophetic words regarding the "suffering servant," the "Messiah," the "son of man." The psychological realities of the situation give the assurance that Jesus was occupied, not with the notion of discovering in them a theory about the nature of his being, but with the idea that such words had light to throw upon his own personal function in the movement, a subject which began to press for consideration.

General enthusiasm waned when it became clear that the movement Jesus led was not the opening stage in the formation of a popular front against Roman authority. At the same time, the opposition of the Pharisees was increasing. The question must have grown more and more urgent in Jesus' mind: what was to be his own personal role in the days ahead? His preaching was not

producing a spiritual mass movement on a national scale. His persuasion was not changing the seething hatred of Roman tyranny into an acceptance of subjection and an embracing of the chance of conquering the soul of the foreigner by spiritual power. If, then, the movement was getting bogged, what was there for him to do?

Might he abandon Jewry and transfer the main drive of the mission to some more sympathetic milieu? Jesus' conviction that the movement was inherent in Judaism, not a transformation of it into something else, but the natural blossoming of Jewish faith and its culmination as the universal spiritual religion in which all families of the earth would be blessed, was decisive against any plan to transplant operations elsewhere. Salvation was to come to all mankind through the Jews. Jesus' purpose was to get his nation's task and destiny fulfilled. Nothing but the success of his movement could vindicate the religious history of his race.

But could he then stand as a leader without followers? If the nation as a whole refused to turn to its missionary vocation and lead the world to a spiritual faith, could he gather upon himself and sustain personally the whole burden of the campaign?

The opinion is, of course, widely held that it was Jesus' plan and purpose from the very first to carry out a purely personal mission, and that either from his earliest days, or at least from the time of his baptism by John, he was aware of a unique status and a supernatural equipment for this task. Since this was a general belief in the early Church by the time that the Gospels were written, it is naturally reflected in many places there, and so it is

easy to find support in the New Testament for such a theory.

The theory, however, is an impossible one. The large general objection to it is that it regards the life of Jesus as the career of one whose activities were determined by his resolve to be a certain religious figure and fulfil a certain programme. It looks at him as one who was, so to speak, always in uniform on parade, and giving a display, rather than one living a free life and action with real energy. His role on this view was more like that of a king whose business it is, with faithfulness and acumen and geniality, to do official things at the right time and in the proper way, than of a leader who brings every gift of heart and brain to bear on the conduct of an actual struggle.

And in particular the theory runs into various difficulties. One is this. John had announced that he was but the forerunner of one mightier than he. Why then did Jesus, if fully aware of his transcendent dignity, not come forward to take the position made ready for him? The imagination is asked to conceive that Jesus, while making an impression of eager, frank sincerity was also moving in an elaborate incognito, burdened with a secret about himself that he awaited the dramatic moment to disclose.

Another difficulty is that the theory makes it impossible to accept and understand the serious intention of the early ministry. In the Gospel account of it the impersonal and objective nature of its message is clear. Jesus proclaimed not himself, but the Kingdom, its arrival, its ethic, its prospect. He sent out disciples, to preach not him, but the Kingdom of God. If full weight

be given to this it is simply not reconcilable with the theory that from the first he felt everything to centre on his own personality.

While setting aside this theory, which has had so large a vogue in theology, it is important at the same time to mark that Jesus brought to his meditation on his function in the movement a personal experience to which there is no parallel. His consciousness of the intimate life of his own soul was free from the disquiet and regretfulness by which the serenity of all but the shallowest natures is ruffled. For one thing, he felt himself to live in unbroken communion with God. Wordsworth's wish that his days might be—

"bound each to each by natural piety"

was plain fact for Jesus. His own experience left him no doubt that the kingdom was a reality and that he himself was in it. The Gospels record numerous unstudied yet definite words which suggest that Jesus was aware of this distinction between his own experience and that of others. The phrase "my Father and your Father, my God and your God," given in the Fourth Gospel, gathers up the impression left elsewhere by his frequent words to others about "your Father" and "my Father." He is never reported as including himself in the group and saying "our Father."

Another indication of this serene poise is seen in the absence of any allusions by him to struggle with the private temptations of personal life, although he was frank in self-revelation. The vivid and suggestive narrative of the temptation in the wilderness, for example, must have come from his own lips, and it is a free con-

fession of how well he knew that eagerness for success makes men toy with the idea of using doubtful tactics, and hesitate about the possibilities of compromise. And in the Garden of Gethsemane, as he shrank from impending doom and prayed that if it were God's will it might be averted, Jesus did not hide his perturbation, but kept disciples close to him. It is therefore the more remarkable and significant that in teaching about such intimate matters as hatred, anger, lust, and greed, with which he dealt plainly and with profound and penetrating insight, there is no hint that he shared any experience of weakness or hesitation.

These features of Jesus' personality must have contributed to his conviction that he was called to some special function. More and more, too, he found himself speaking with a personal emphasis that was spontaneous and unforced, rooted in the reality of his own mind and of the situation. "Moses said. . . . I say," "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It was evident, too, that men who grasped but little of the meaning of what he said were finding in personal discipleship peace of mind and the key to life's problems. His own experience of being in the Kingdom was proving contagious. The Kingdom became present where he was present. Men realised and felt this. Jesus found himself the channel of divine and gracious power. He healed. He converted sinners from their ways. He was, in fact, not only proclaiming, but inaugurating the reign of God. How was this? What secret of character or nature or experience gave him this function? How could a leader, feeling the hollowness of the support for his movement and the uncertainty of the future, still

speak with serene confidence? What was it that gave to Jesus the assurance of his own personal competence to secure the realisation of the purpose of the movement?

In feeling after some definition of his own function and basis for his assurance, Jesus was influenced, not only by the situation and its requirements, and by his awareness of special features in his own experience, but by the suggestion and guidance he found in the Hebrew scriptures. It was a peculiar glory of Hebrew prophecy that it always set the golden age, not in the past, but in the future, which would be better than the evil present, because God was the living God, whose purpose was still to be revealed and realised. No one therefore who found inspiration as Jesus did in these scriptures, could avoid relating his hopes for the future and his thoughts about any religious function of his own to the prophetic forecasts of the Old Testament. In any review of the problems presented by the actual situation he had to include the bearing of the true interpretation of the scriptures. The question might be asked in two ways. Did the scriptures yield the conception of a definite role he might set himself to fulfil? Or did the career in which he was engaged furnish the light by which these various scriptures might be read? These two ways of approach could not be kept separate by one who had found and still sought in the scriptures direction in the path of duty. In the result Jesus reached in thought and action a solution that gathered up and unified the most profound elements in Hebrew prophecy and speculation. It was his own original achievement. These Old Testament titles, Servant of the Lord, Messiah, Son of Man, were not like labels that had only to be picked up and fixed on to con-

stitute a precise and flaming declaration of his authority. To imagine this is to carry back from Christianity to that age of Judaism a definiteness which these ideas did not possess until they were illuminated, unified and realised in the thought and action of Jesus.

Foremost in Jesus' thought stood the passages in Isaiah that describe the "servant of the Lord" who is to suffer for others, and proclaim the gospel of salvation. As modern scholars have seen, the "servant" is a personification of the nation of Israel, bearing more than a due share of human misery, yet charged with a mission of hope and consolation, and by its very sufferings enabled to fulfil it. When Jesus took his stand from the outset on these passages, he was not rejecting this interpretation. That was the vocation of his nation; of every member of it, himself included, and so he would take a lead in fulfilling it, while he also set his followers to do their part too as preachers. It was when it grew evident that the nation as a whole was not going to be drawn into the missionary attitude and activity that the question emerged, could then this role of servant become a purely personal one, leading through hatred and opposition to shame and death?

It would be only natural if the possibility of such a personal fulfilment of the "servant" prophecies at once raised the question of their relation to another set of passages, very different in tone and temper, those about the Messiah. That was beyond doubt an individual figure, a triumphant prince who would one day deliver the nation from its foes and establish it in glory and righteousness. Obviously such prophecies lent themselves to exciting possibilities. It lay open for anyone with a

vigorous programme to make a bid for active support by claiming to be Messiah. This line of prophecy was not, however, regarded very seriously by the religious leaders of Jewry. The Pharisees disliked it because it implied the supersession of the law which had become for them the very essence of religion. They noted cynically how many Messiahs had announced themselves and faded out. The question was indeed put to Jesus at his trial, did he claim to be Messiah or not, and it formed a kind of trap, for he could not deny it in their political sense without involving his own religious sense of the term as well. But it would be a mistake to fancy that the court was vastly interested in whether or not he claimed to be Messiah in any sense. How little they cared about such a claim is seen in the fact that, for years after the crucifixion, Jesus' disciples were free to maintain in the very precincts of the temple, that in him the Messiah had come.

The significance of the forecasts about Messiah was thus neglected in religion and cheapened in politics, and it might have seemed to contain nothing appropriate to Jesus' purpose. The fact that Messiah was a personal figure, however, caught his imagination. If he had to accomplish what he stood for singlehanded, here was the scriptural sanction for such a prospect. So Jesus made the profound and original decision that the suffering servant and the glorious Messiah must be one person, and perceived that in doing the servant's work and bearing his load he was also proving himself and taking upon himself to be the culminating figure in the religious history of his race. This is not to say that his activity took a different turn as the result of Bible study, but rather

that all that he was actually doing and felt called upon to do threw a new light on the interpretation of scripture, and then this reading of scripture gave a fresh sanction to his work.

The fact that in common thought the "Messiah" had a strong political connotation and that this combination of the ideas of "servant" and "Messiah" was novel and startling, explains why Jesus was reserved about its use. The disciples were sorely disconcerted at the announcement that it implied martyrdom. The multitude would have taken it as a signal for some political move far from Jesus' thoughts. But with all his reserve about it, the claim to the title lay in Jesus' mind. And the fact remained that in scripture the term Messiah did have a political significance. The Hebrew idea of the Kingdom of God was no mere abstract spiritual conception. It was also a concrete social ideal that was to be realised. How then was a Messiah who as the servant of the Lord was doomed to suffer, also to establish and dominate a glorious dominion?

A solution of this problem could be reached only in speculative and poetic fashion and by extending the limits of reality beyond the present known order of things. Jesus detected in the Hebrew scriptures an idea of the required range, and found in the mysterious expression "Son of Man" a meaning and suggestiveness peculiarly congenial to his mind and suited to hold his thought.

Jesus used this phrase in a characteristic fashion as a way of speaking of himself. It may indeed often have been a colloquial way of saying, without personal emphasis, "I," as in English it may be said "one feels," "one

thinks." But for Jesus, and anyone familiar with the scriptures, it would carry an allusion to the way Ezekiel the prophet was addressed as, "Son of Man," and to the words of the eighth Psalm, "What is man and what the son of man?" where the thought concerns man's relation to God. It is evident from the gospels that the phrase was frequently on his lips and was accepted without difficulty by his hearers as his way of alluding to himself.

What lent it its attraction for Jesus, however, was that it could also be taken as a reference to Daniel, one of the latest books of the Old Testament, in which there is a strain of the speculative fancy that came to run riot in the wild outpourings of apocalyptic literature. In that place the words were fitted to intrigue the imagination, and they had the advantage of being unencumbered by previous dogmatic interpretation. Daniel "saw in the night visions, and behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven. . . . His dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." At the same time this mysterious being, triumphant and glorious, who establishes the final and enduring community of God's folk, is defined only by his humanity. The point is that, whoever he may be, he is not brutish, but human.

And only a few sentences farther on in Daniel, the figure of one like the son of man is lost sight of, and the kingdom becomes simply that of "the people of the saints of the most High." This holy community is the Hebrew version of the ideal State where kings are philosophers and philosophers kings. And the very passage which suggested the ultimate triumph of the suffering Messiah as "Son of Man" at the same time went on to em-

phasise the kingdom itself as a centre of interest. This was not only congenial to the spirit of Jesus, but was precisely what he was doing in the course of his work. While he had to accept the position of Lord and Master which the moral situation accorded him, he was also constituting himself the pattern for common daily life. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." "I have given you an example that ye wash one another's feet."

So once again Jesus effected a daring combination of scriptural ideas; and again the use of the literature is moved by the pressure of actual conditions. Mystics have always had "fancies that broke through language and escaped." The language of apocalypse offered itself to Jesus as a vehicle for the formation of his assurance of victory. Yet this assurance was based on no prerogative, but simply on true manhood realised. The allusion to Daniel allowed him to stress his own life, not proudly, but simply as the character that constitutes the kingdom, and also to escape on wings of faith and poetry into regions beyond sight and calculation. It offered scriptural encouragement to do what he himself felt to be an essential part of his duty, namely, to exhibit and teach the characteristics of ideal human life. If he were "Son of Man" in the sense of Daniel's vision, it meant that all his activity in kindness and friendship and everything covered by such a phrase as "rich humanity," and all his concern in commending such conduct to men, was not gratuitous embroidery on his main function in the movement, but, as he saw it to be, an essential part of his task. Though his mission was to preach the gospel and to suffer as "the servant," and to do so in a solitariness that gave him the personal significance of "Messiah,"

it did not take him out of common life, as "Son of Man."

This combination of the poetic suggestion in these three prophetic words "suffering servant of the Lord," "Messiah," and "Son of Man" may be presented as though it were the result of the study of the literature by a critic of profound moral insight. It is justly appreciated only when it is seen to have been attained under the pressure and in the course of the solution of the actual problems of the life Jesus was leading. The conclusion at which he arrived about his own central place and function in the movement was the result of relating his life to the hopes expressed in Hebrew prophecy and at the same time interpreting these ancient scriptures in the light of the clear demands of duty that day by day he encountered and fulfilled. It is not likely that Jesus ever arrived at what theologians would call a doctrine about his own being. His thoughts about himself were too vital for such crystallisation. It was not about himself but about the path of duty that he sought certainty. The certainty by which he lived was his knowledge of God. "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son," he once said, passing from thanksgiving for the success of the preaching of the kingdom to a sudden realisation that it was due to himself, and meditating on this serene assurance of Divine fellowship that sustained him and gave him a power that others did not possess. But he accompanied those words with a resigned admission that in some way his life, his very being, was a mystery to himself. "No man knoweth who the Son is, save the Father."

Along such lines, and at some stage in his career which cannot be precisely determined, Jesus reached consciousness that his personal function in the movement was to

be more than leadership. Without such a conviction it would not have been possible for him to have sustained his activity in the way he had begun, while the failure of the movement to carry the nation grew more and more clear. For that is what he did. The ideas, the very words of his earliest teaching in Galilee, are the burden of his latest preaching in Jerusalem.

What is not easy to imagine is any way in which this course of action could have been persisted in for any lengthy period. That problem did not arise. Jesus felt no need to face it. He was "fey." There was no inward urge to form long-term plans. Some instinct or insight made him know that the time in front of him was days or weeks, not years.

V

THE SUDDEN DOOM

Jesus' programme unaltered.

The precipitation of a crisis.

A rapid denouement.

Jesus, martyr for the New Covenant.

THE conclusion at which Jesus had arrived, that his function was to gather up the movement into some personal course of action which would be a tragic climax involving for himself humiliation, suffering, and death, made no difference to the immediate programme of his days. Nothing indeed called for alteration. Confident of the rightness of each step he took Jesus was content to await whatever challenge he might meet, whatever denouement might be forced upon him, as he walked in his chosen path. One thing indeed pressed upon his mind. He must go to Jerusalem. Not by transplanting it to some foreign soil, but by making its claim in the national and religious centre of Judaism, could the vindication and triumph of the movement be secured.

The suggestion has been made that in going to the capital Jesus had a plan to put himself forward there for public acceptance as Messiah. Several considerations make this unacceptable.

For one thing, he had already found his own disciples unable to accept the idea that as Messiah he should suffer martyrdom. If he made claim to be Messiah, it could only be in his own novel conception of what it meant, and nothing was clearer than that no one would have so understood it.

Further, such a challenging claim could be made sincerely only if it were made with at least some spark of hope that it would be acknowledged, and with some idea of a programme that would then be followed. There is no hint that Jesus entertained the possibility of such a development; on the contrary, his premonition that he

would presently die a violent death is emphasised. The memory of John's tragic end was fresh. The great prophets had been martyrs. It is not surprising that in Jesus' mind the conviction grew to certainty that either by the deliberate action of growing hatred, or through some sudden stroke of spite or malice, his life would be the price of faithfulness to his vocation. Without hope of being understood or accepted, any public claim to be Messiah would have been an unreal gesture.

Moreover, the suggestion is quite gratuitous in view of the testimony of the Gospel narratives that Jesus' arrival at Jerusalem was marked by a fresh outburst of activity on the familiar lines. "He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel," says Luke. "He began to speak to them in parables," says Mark. The reports of this teaching are that it was full of echoes of the Galilean teaching on the hill, and repeated old themes and figures of speech. While the parable of the king's son and heir, and the curious question about the Christ being David's son or Lord, reveal the occupation of Jesus' mind with the problem of his personal function, the central subject of his speaking is still the kingdom. The information of the Gospels is that Jesus carried on in the last days in Jerusalem the same kind of propaganda that he had begun in Galilee. The proclamation of the kingdom of God with its new principles of service, love and meekness, which is found in the fifth chapter of Matthew, is repeated in the twenty-third.

Jesus had, however, almost immediately on his arrival at Jerusalem, taken an action which, as it turned out, precipitated a crisis and brought his career to a sudden end. It was an action which singularly fitted the leader

of the movement for a universal and spiritual religion, and it made him definitely a martyr to its aim.

The more genial strain in prophetic anticipation, that which looked forward to the conversion of the heathen rather than their extermination, had its counterpart in the provision for Gentile visitors to the Temple of open access to its outer court. It therefore specially outraged Jesus' feeling to see this court given largely over to the business of money-changing and the sale of sacrificial victims certified as suitable for offerings. However great might be the practical convenience of some such arrangement, which conceivably might have been made with due regard to decorum, its actual conduct was a noisy, public scandal, and its business ramifications a vast financial racket. It was a religious calamity that this was the spectacle encountered by foreign visitors, whether piously inclined or not, who sought the approach permitted to them to the great centre of Jewish worship. In a burst of indignation Jesus took the law into his own hands, and with no force but his own blazing wrath and the threat of a knotted cord, he hustled the whole mass of the traders and their wares out of the Temple precincts, with the approval of the watching crowd. Some have seen in this an attack by Jesus on the whole sacrificial system,¹ in principle, as well as in operation. Jesus, however, does not seem to have concerned himself with theoretical questions about the worship at the altar. As far, indeed, as it was involved in the sanitary regulations about leprosy, he expressly enjoined its observance; otherwise his interest is never focused on temple ritual. What he based his action upon in "cleansing the temple" was the flagrant graft of the traffic and its interference with the proper

use of the court as a place of prayer available to men of every race.

This action might well have found approval in the eyes of the Pharisees, and inclined them to give Jesus any protection they could, had they not already been alienated by Jesus' attitude to the law. As it was, the challenge thus thrown down without a glance at consequences, to the financial interests of the worldly ecclesiastics, who made enormous profits in the Temple markets, found Jesus without any friends who might have sheltered him from their immediate and ruthless reaction. Though the Pharisees had been content to let the issue between them and Jesus drag on in interminable controversy, the Sadducean plutocracy, threatened in its vested interests, struck back at once. They were a powerful clique. They knew that the Pharisees and scribes would have no desire to interfere, nor was there any need to bring them into an affair that could be quickly arranged.

Some plotting was indeed necessary. Since, so far from courting death, Jesus was taking such precautions as would not compromise his dignity or hamper his activity, withdrawing from the city at night and appearing in public places only when surrounded by followers, an assassination would be difficult to plan and uncertain in execution. A public attack might easily lead to riot. They wished to avoid this, and on the other hand they had no interest, such as the Pharisees might have had, in a formal religious prosecution. All they cared for was to be rid of one who threatened the source of their wealth. The decision was for a secret arrest and judicial murder. One main provision was that Pilate, the Roman Governor, should be squared beforehand. This was done; Roman

soldiers were present at the arrest; and he was ready to sit on the case at dawn.

Looking back on the arrest and trial and death of Jesus in the light of the tremendous interest they commanded in the Christian Church afterwards, the Gospel writers have given an atmosphere of pomp and circumstance to these events which makes it difficult to recover the perspective in which they were viewed at the time, and to realise the obscurity in which they were shrouded and their small impact on feeling in the city. Yet even so, these narratives which regard the final scenes of Jesus' life as the solemn climax of their story, do contain evidence that what the world has ever since pondered with wonder, and reverence, caused little sensation when it happened.

There was in fact no general excitement regarding Jesus in the populace. Nothing would have prevented the disciples from raising the city if it had required but a spark to kindle a flame of enthusiasm for him. What the stealthy plotters who arranged the midnight arrest and the morning trial feared was delays or complications, not rescue. They had no care to keep the execution private, only to make it prompt. The fact that it was needful to bribe a traitor in the disciple band to give information that Jesus would be found in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that a signal was required to make certain of his identification by the police—Judas betrayed him with a kiss—does not fit in with the idea that he was an outstanding figure in Jerusalem. The notion has to be guarded against that Jerusalem was a quiet little town in which only one big event could happen at a time. It was about a mile in diameter, with both huddled streets

and open spaces in which various crowds might assemble independently. In the vast enclosure of the temple, multitudes could wander, and in its porches and colonnades dozens of groups could meet for discussion without attracting great notice. At festivals, too, the population was swollen by thousands of pilgrims whose tents and shelters, scattered down the adjacent slopes, suggested to one Psalmist the ointment that flowed down Aaron's beard. In understanding how little the fate of Jesus ruffled the city's life, it is to the point to remember how little the arrest of a Hyde Park orator may disturb busy London.

It is clear that the plans for swiftness and such secrecy as was required were entirely successful. Even the Cross on which the world has gazed back ever since attracted little notice. Far from its being the city's spectacle that day, its inconspicuousness is witnessed to in the Fourth Gospel, which in some places shows a more precise acquaintance than the others with events in Jerusalem. A little note is given there to explain how the Cross was not altogether unnoticed. Pilate had put over it the mocking title, "This is the King of the Jews." John says, "This title therefore read many of the Jews for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city." The sense is that the title over the Cross, and indeed the whole incident of the Crucifixion, might have escaped attention, had it not been so near a frequented road. The remark would be pointless if great multitudes had gone out for the very purpose of seeing it. The point made is not that the spot was within walking distance—that was a matter of course—but that the title was within reading distance of casual passers-by, and so did receive a certain measure of regard. But it was without heed to publicity or privacy

that the Cross was planted to which Jesus was nailed and left to die. A few women pitied the prisoner as he was led out in the morning light. Some of his disciples and friends watched the grisly horror. A few priests or their agents came to gloat over their victim, while the life of the city ran its normal course.

To go back, however, to Jesus' closing activities in Jerusalem: he had no illusion about the danger in which he walked, nor expectation that he would long evade it. Indeed, by some insight or divination, he foresaw that the end would be no swift, silent stab in the back, but condemnation to the cruelest, most contemptuous punishment invented by man. And on what proved the last evening he spent with his disciples, he took special pains to define what the movement stood for, and to declare that it was for that that he would die. They were gathered by his prearrangement for a social and ceremonial meal of religious fellowship, a way in which groups of pious Jews often prepared themselves for the Passover feast. Partaking at a common social board friends were accustomed to vow themselves to a common earnestness in devotion. When at supper with his disciples the time came for passing round the pledging cup, Jesus made it the occasion for the plain definition of the meaning of the movement to which they were all dedicated. It was the establishment of the "new covenant" of which Jeremiah had spoken in the words: "I will write a new covenant in their hearts and their sin will I remember no more." It would seem to have been inevitable at this point that Jesus, if he had judged it to be a true and helpful idea, would have spoken of the relation of the death he was facing to the ritual sacrifices of Judaism. But he

had never dwelt on matters of the Jewish cultus. And it really deserves attention that the analogy he himself finds for his death is not there but in the fate of the prophets of old who had been slain, and of the great John. So now he seizes on the word of promise that speaks of the act of God that is without sacrifice or ceremony or legal sanction.

To make this reference to the covenant was not to bring in an idea just as encumbered with technicalities and out of gear with modern thought as that of ritual sacrifice. For the outstanding feature of the Old Testament allusions to the renewed covenant of God with his people is that it involves no technicality, that it means, and this is particularly emphasised by Jeremiah, a religion entirely spiritual and real and personal.

No doubt the laborious and pedantic discussions of the term "covenant" which make intolerable reading now, even in old attempts to popularise them in handbooks for the young, suggest that an understanding of Jesus' use of this word depends on the study of ancient Hebrew law; and indeed there was a period when, with the inveterate legalism of the human mind, theologians strove, on the basis of some theory of the atonement, to interpret the gospel as a "plan of salvation." In his latest contribution to Old Testament studies,² A. B. Davidson pointed the way out of the forest of such discussions though he still lingered among the trees. The Hebrew word never had the association the English translation "covenant" has with legal parchments by which obligations and restrictions are made enforceable. From its earlier use the word had a charm and power that made

later writers cling to it though they gave it a new and large and gracious sense. In all references to the restoration of the relation between God and Israel that had been ruptured by sin and its punishment, the word covers forgiveness and righteousness and peace. As Davidson puts it, "In its visions of the new covenant the Old Testament becomes Christian." The new covenant "written in the heart" is in the heart of each individual. It means that God is realised in heart and conscience. It means what James calls "the perfect law of liberty," what Paul describes as being "led by the Spirit," to have the fruitful desire for virtue created within the heart by Divine grace. "Covenant" had become a poetic word of unlimited meaning, covering all that can be experienced of God's grace and power to create moral effort and achievement in His people; covering indeed all that is implied in the promise, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The Jewish philosopher Philo reached the heart of the matter when he said that God Himself is the highest kind of covenant, the beginning and source of all graces.

The link with the earlier covenant notion had thus become purely verbal. An analogy is the use of the word "commandment" in the saying of Jesus in John, "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another." That does not make love a new legality. It was surely then this large, profound, utterly untechnical sense of the word that led Jesus to use it that evening, and to dwell on the place where one prophet, by inserting the word "new," specially insists on the difference between all the primitive bargaining ideas once in the word, and the

pure notion of grace which it now contained. "The cup of the new covenant" was simply another and a natural way for Jesus to say, "the cup of the grace of God."

There had been old covenants that were mutual bargains, basing a relation between God and his worshippers on obedience to law and faithfulness to ritual. Though they had appeared reasonable and were even stimulating to those who believed in them, they had two defects. One was that the introduction of any ritual immediately defined a circle for whom alone the covenant was valid. The other was that in practice, human failure perfectly to keep the conditions was certain, and so the covenant brought no blessing. "If thou shalt hearken to these judgments and keep them and do them, the Lord shall keep with thee the covenant and mercy which He sware unto thy fathers." Like other prophets, Jeremiah, who had tried in vain as a prophet to get his people to keep the bargain, says that the old covenants with their "if's" and "then's" will be thrown aside in favour of making the whole basis of religion the promise of Divine grace and the gift of free forgiveness. The new covenant was to be hedged by no law and maintained by no sacrifice. It was unrestricted, spiritual, creative of moral energy, a personal experience, and therefore open to all humanity. This was the reign of God that Jesus preached. This, said Jesus, pledging them anew to loyalty to the movement in which they stood, is the new covenant; and he adds "in my blood," for he was going to sacrifice life to the establishment of this faith.

Sacrifice! Jesus sacrificed his life for the sake of a religion in which there were no sacrifices nor any forms of

symbolic ritual, a religion in which everything was real. The word "covenant" which Jesus used would not have implied a sacrifice even if the word had retained an active reference to primitive covenants, for ancient covenants did not require a sacrifice, and if sometimes an unlucky beast was killed, it was not as an offering or a substitute victim, but simply as a warning illustration of the fate of one breaking faith. Actually, Jesus used the word as the prophets and with special emphasis Jeremiah did, as an archaic yet familiar and moving word for all that is in the expression "the grace of God." The one sense in which Jesus' death was a sacrifice is the modern sense from which every old-world notion of ritual and priest and symbolic offering or artificial substitution has been discarded, leaving stark reality. When a man dies for a cause, "on the altar of his country," it may be said in archaic language, it is in utter reality. His death is not a symbol, but the translation into reality and action of his patriotism, his love for his fellow citizens, his willingness it may be to avert from them the consequences of faults or folly, or the assaults of the enemy. In modern speech this is what the word "sacrifice" means, reality, not symbol, and it is in this sense alone that Jesus' death was sacrifice. There was no priest or ceremony about it. The cross was not an altar. The crucifixion was not something that really meant something else, it was the real, ghastly killing of one who was wanted out of the way. Jesus had dared, by cleansing the Temple, to vindicate the practical rights of spiritual religion in the courts that were meant to be its home and mission centre, and it cost him his life. Financiers whose interests were at stake

struck back, and men whose narrow legal ideas of religion were being made to look obsolete were well content to see him die.

NOTES

1. W. O. E. Oesterley in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Vol. 2, p. 712.

2. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, article "Covenant."

VI

PASSION IS ACTION TOO

The triumph of movement depends not just on Jesus' death, but on how he died.

His experience on the Cross guarantees the New Covenant.

His death not symbolic but real.

Old ideas of sacrifice as symbol confuse thought about Jesus' death.

The Lord's Table cannot be also an altar.

JESUS had arrived at the conviction that it was to be his function to sum up the movement and bring it to triumph through some personal action that would mean suffering and death to himself. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me"; so the Fourth Gospel reports Jesus' recognition that the power of his personality, that was giving the movement such success as it had while he lived would have an overwhelming appeal when he became its martyr. A leader left with no followers to lead, Jesus did not lose faith in the victory of the movement, but only realised that what it stood for was committed personally to himself, and would be vindicated in his death. The covenant of the Grace of God would be forever associated with his dying for it. It would become the new covenant in his blood. So indeed it has come to pass. Jesus was led forth to die with scorn and cruelty and shame heaped upon him; and from the Cross he has swayed the hearts of men. It is what Paul afterwards meant when he wrote, "the word of the cross is the power of God," and what stands in the Epistle of John, "Hereby know we love because he laid down his life for us."

In all the plain story of his end the Fourth Gospel gives perhaps the one poetic touch, and even this may be unstudied. Describing how Jesus was brought before Pilate, a prisoner clad in mock-regal garments, it reads, "Then came forth Jesus, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns." It is the royal entry of the King of Love. The amazing thing is that in these hours when life seemed over and nothing more to be possible to do or say, his personality continued to leave its deepest im-

pression on every witness, and so the story of his Passion is one of action too.

For Jesus did not reach his achievement simply through the fact that he was "killed in action." The movement was not consummated merely by costing his life. Not just by his death, but by how he died, he gave the crowning touch that assured its victory. As the seven words from the Cross testify, even there he carried on his ministry of teaching and example while breath remained, suffering with gentle and uncomplaining dignity, forgiving and preaching forgiveness, opening the door of the kingdom, a pattern of pious dutifulness toward God and man. It is partly, no doubt, this that gives the Cross its power. But chiefly it was that in his experience, as he suffered thus for the movement, he added the one thing that had been lacking in its dynamic, a concrete guarantee that it was based on reality. Had he been killed by a quick thrust, stabbed as he preached, or in some dark alley, his death, in its mysterious instant would have been as inscrutable as death always is. All that there is to ponder and interpret in what happened on Calvary lies not in the bare fact that the cord of life was severed, but in the spiritual agony through which he passed in full consciousness as he endured the last penalty.

No account of Jesus' place in the movement therefore would be complete without an analysis and estimate of this experience. It is evidence that it came to Jesus as something new, beyond anticipation, outside any reasoned imagination of the ordeal. If Jesus had understood that his suffering amounted to a deliberate, logical method of obtaining salvation for others (what theologians have called a plan of salvation), his death could

have been like that of many a martyr, glad, confident, serene even in the midst of mortal pain. One Canadian said in the war of 1914, "What parents at home hardly realise is that men give their lives gladly." When the Christian martyr Ignatius heard the Roman Emperor condemn him to death, he cried, "I give Thee thanks, O Lord." When Hugh Mackail, the young Scots covenanter, stumbled down the Grassmarket in Edinburgh on his mangled legs on the way to the scaffold his face is said to have shone with joy. So men have died, knowing what their death was accomplishing, proud and even joyful that they were giving their lives for others, or for a cause. It is evident that on the contrary something entered into Jesus' experience that filled him with confusion, horror, misgiving, an agony of mind as great as of body, a spirit of despair. How did such a death achieve more for the movement than anything else that he had said or done?

It did this because in this experience Jesus supplied the guarantee the new covenant had lacked. The defect in Jeremiah's message of a new covenant was that it was a bare word, an idea with no fact or event on which to rest. It was good tidings if men could believe it, as some did; for instance, many a psalmist. But if, oppressed by a sense of guilt and a knowledge of personal failure, anyone doubted, how was any mere declaration to make him sure? He might despair, or he might feel driven or be persuaded to take refuge in some less purely spiritual religion that offered tangible, visible guarantees, or formulated some code, the keeping of which would merit salvation. One who took seriously the idea of a just and holy God, and felt with a breaking heart the shame of

sin might well say to himself that just to accept the word of some prophet that God will pardon all was too easy a way to smooth away the fear of judgment. And the trouble need not be just a man's thought of his own sin. Isaiah said, "Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." In his history of the struggle for liberty in Italy a hundred years ago Trevelyan mentions an Italian patriot, Count Settembrini, who was arrested by the Tyrant of Naples, and flung into a dungeon among the most degraded criminals. In his wretched confinement he kept a diary, and on one of its pages are these words: "My body and my clothes are soiled; it is no use trying to keep clean. My spirit is tainted. I feel all the hideousness, the horror, the terror of crime. My spirit is being undone. It seems to me as if my hands also were foul with blood and theft." Jesus too felt the foulness and shame of human conduct, and it raised the inevitable problem for heart and mind about the possibility of its forgiveness by God.

It is true that Jesus, like every thoughtful man, must have faced this problem before, though in his serene faith in God his heavenly Father he had had no difficulty in preaching free forgiveness. But in that last hour, as the cruelty and injustice of men and their contempt for the Creator of life came home to his own flesh and spirit, and he knew that what he underwent was just a sample of what men did daily to one another, it became an agonising doubt whether God could forgive such things. If he himself in love could and did still forgive, did that mean that in love and loyalty to humankind he was losing touch with God above? Out of this bewilderment of

thought and feeling comes the great cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"¹

There was no answer to such doubt in any logic. The deepest philosophy confesses that there is a surd in the moral universe. No solution is possible to the problem of evil. Evil cannot be explained without being explained away. And as truly no exposition of forgiveness can show that forgiveness an entirely reasonable course. Jesus just lived through this dying experience, holding on in an agonising strain of thought and discord of emotion both to faith in God's holiness and in forgiving love. He gave no reasoned solution of the problem. It was his anguish that he saw none, felt none. If he had reached any, it would have been the "theory of the atonement" after which theologians have groped in vain. The only true theory is that none is possible. Jesus fathomed the abyss of loathing and wrath, and impotent hopelessness and despair that sin can uncover. So to all that gave the Cross its broad appeal was added that which makes it a deep answer to man's profoundest ethical misgivings.

For Jesus lived through this experience and emerged from it. His dying words were, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." He died believing that though forgiveness was that mystery for heart and mind it was not beyond God, and that his own forgiving love for men had not broken his fellowship with the Heavenly Father. God was never in more perfect fellowship with Jesus than in that hour of almost despairing darkness, and therefore this dying triumph of Jesus' faith demands to be interpreted as the revelation of the heart and mind of God Himself.

This experience of Jesus thus supplied the objective

basis which the new covenant had hitherto been without. His passion was an action in which he proved that the new covenant was no mere declaration, but the very nature and energy of God. He thus established a foundation for the personal, universal and spiritual religion which satisfies the conscience and the aspirations of humanity. In the end he was more than the leader in the movement for spirituality and universality in religion. He gathered up its essence and consummated it in the experience of his dying hour. Nothing more can be conceived or done to ensure its victory. Jesus made it inevitable that after his death the religious issue should become not that between one form of religion and another but simply this, does a man reject all belief in God, or does he, in the phrase used by the Apostle Peter, "believe in God through him"?

The fact that the word "sacrifice" has been so commonly applied to the death of Jesus requires closer examination. The essential consideration is to allow for the fact that this application of the word has effected a complete change in its use and meaning in common speech. The Cross has changed its whole suggestiveness. Sacrifice now means self-sacrifice, something not symbolic but utterly real. It simply does not carry any longer its former ideas of ritual and symbol. When Denney, the great New Testament scholar, makes the admission, "sacrifice is not a familiar nor a self-interpreting idea for us," he might have said more truly that the word "sacrifice" is perfectly familiar, but in the modern sense of something entirely real. All that is carried over from its ancient use is just a vague feeling of religious or quasi-religious solemnity.

In present-day usage, three examples may illustrate the wide range over which it has come to be employed. A hero is said to sacrifice his life for country or comrade, a smoker is described as sacrificing his tobacco that he may devote more money to a good cause, a sales catalogue announces that in a commercial transaction for the benefit presumably of the advertiser goods will be sold at a sacrifice. In each case the word stresses the actual and voluntary yielding of what might have been retained, life, pleasure, or cash profit. The words "give up" would express quite adequately the real action involved. The point of using the word sacrifice is to invest the action with the exaltation of sentiment associated with offerings to God. In the examples given it would thus seem that the word is suitable in the first case, just permissible in the second and ludicrous in the last. And in cases where the sacrifice is directly for a religious object the word would be exactly right. But further it has to be noted that in every case it stands for an action totally real. A man's death for his country is not a sign of his love for it, like waving a flag, it is the actual operation of his love. If anyone claims to be making a sacrifice the inference is that he is stressing the reality of his action, often its genuineness rather than its magnitude.

No such change had been reached in the Jewish use of the word. On the lowest level of primitive religion sacrifices were supposed to furnish actual supplies for divine needs in the way of food or pleasure. Traces of this belief linger in poetic references to the sweet-smelling savour of offerings. Such crude ideas had been abandoned. But what, then, in the Jewish tradition, was the accepted rationale of the sacrificial system? In the main

it seems simply to have been accepted without any theory about its operation, as a fiat of the Divine law to which the righteous and the patriotic owed exact and unquestioning obedience. This is not, of course, to say that no ideas were attached to sacrifices. One simple case, the killing of a beast at the making of a covenant was indeed not strictly speaking a sacrifice but an object-lesson on the fate of one who should break the faith being pledged. But to sacrifices in the proper sense of offerings, especially of slain victims to God, various symbolic meanings were attached. Tithes were a token that all was really Jehovah's. Sin-offerings were an acknowledgement that a penalty had been incurred. The passover was a memorial of the first national deliverance, and an occasion of the rededication of each household to the national faith. In other sacrifices, when the lavish expenditure of material went beyond the bare requirements of the ritual, they gave expression by the added expense or splendour of the outward worship to the fervour of the spiritual devotion. The idea was always retained that the sacrifice was a symbol and that its validity depended on correct ritual.

It is therefore not surprising, still it has received far too little notice, that in the New Testament the word "sacrifice" is largely avoided in connection with the death of Jesus. In view of the fact that his death was felt to have a profound significance with regard to the forgiveness of sins: and that this word "sacrifice" was conspicuous in the religious vocabulary relating the assurance of forgiveness to the death of beasts, it would have been very easy for New Testament writers to seize upon the parallel, as later theologians did, if they had

thought that it yielded a deep insight into the meaning of the Cross. But, like Jesus himself, they did not enter on that line of reflection. Again and again they find the deepest meaning of the death of Jesus not in any symbolism, but in its simple and direct reality. So Paul says, "God spared not His only Son but delivered him up for us all," and again, "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." So in John are the words, "Hereby perceive we the Love of God because he laid down his life for us." So the author of Hebrews who has so much to say about priests and sacrifices speaks also of the death of Jesus, "who endured the Cross despising the shame" as, not a passive offering, but a triumph of active faith. In these places Paul and John do not suggest that the death of Jesus is a mere symbol of God's love in general, or that it was a way of securing God's pardoning love. What they say is that Jesus' death reveals and expresses the whole reality of Divine love in its actual operation in its depth and height and power.

The Johannine phrase "Lamb of God" is an allusion to the suffering servant in Isaiah rather than to the victims of the altar. Paul's words "set forth as a propitiation" refer like the third chapter of John to the story of the Brazen Serpent in the wilderness set up upon a pole that those who looked on it might be cured. And in the places where the word "sacrifice" does occur it has to be remembered the casual use of a word does not prove the taking over of the whole framework of associations in which it had lain. The word "clean" for instance, to take an example lying very close at hand, is used in the New Testament in an ethical sense tinged with religious feel-

ing, partly doubtless because of its solemn associations with ritual: but it is not meant to suggest detailed analogies with Levitical *tabus*. So it is no more than the casual use of a vocabulary that in that age lay to hand; when Paul says "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us"; or when Ephesians says "he hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour"; an analogy between the Father's approval of Jesus' self-sacrifice and the quasi-sensuous Divine satisfaction in the odours of an altar which may have passed easily enough in the Roman world, but which the modern mind will rather put aside altogether than take the trouble to spiritualise.

It may have been a consciousness of the insuperable difficulty of drawing any reasonable analogy between the death of Jesus on the Cross and the death of beasts on the altar that made Paul when he is theologising prefer the conceptions of Roman law and judicial right to those of sacrifice. And Paul has weighty things to say of Divine justice and mercy. In a later age Anselm worked out a theory of Jesus' death as the payment of an obligation, a theory which for all its profundity, reached the startling conclusion that it was a ransom paid to the Devil. In modern times McLeod Campbell brought about some return to reality and psychological truth in suggesting as the chief element in Jesus' death a vicarious repentance for the sins of mankind.

The strange obsession of later Christian theology and hymnology with the notion that the tangled origins and obscure complications of ancient ritual might throw some shining light upon the Cross of Jesus stands in curious contrast to the sentiment of Judaism in the New

Testament period which had transferred the real focus of religious life from the elaborate cultus of the altar to the simple worship of the synagogue. In the course of these speculative discussions much has of course been nobly and truly said. The difficulties that remain insuperable arise because the attempt is being made to dovetail the conclusions of clear thinking into the framework of the obscure system of ceremonial sacrifice. This makes it imperative to try to interpret the death of Jesus too as a symbol of some larger, more general or abstract reality such as the Divine righteousness or law or justice, and as a dramatic revelation rather than a passionate action.

The way beyond the impasse, blocked by so many monumental volumes, lies in abiding by the fact that Jesus died in the service of the movement for which he lived. It would have meant much for the purity and peace of Christianity if men had accepted his own account of the relation of his death to the historical and spiritual movement in religion. His death was a martyrdom, not a ceremony. It happened at a place of execution, not in a temple. To say that Jesus died for sin in the sense of giving an illustration or symbol or satisfaction of the legal principle that "the wages of sin is death" does not penetrate a single fathom deeper into truth than to say he was killed because he pursued his good purpose in a wicked world. His claim that the new covenant is "in his blood" is amply justified by the fact that only those who find the guarantee of their religious faith in the life, and especially in the death of Jesus, experience the peace and power that comes from the assurance that the covenant is true.

The exception to the merely casual use of the term "sacrifice" is one place where the author of Hebrews does deliberately try to interpret the death of Jesus along the lines of Old Testament ritual, and quickly gets into difficulties! He energetically proves by quotations from the Old Testament itself the futility of bloody sacrifices, and contrasts them with the willing obedience for which man's body is given him. This logically leads to the seemingly inevitable conclusion that Jesus died to establish a religion in which there are no sacrifices only service, the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah. But he becomes needlessly frightened that this true and adequate account of Jesus' death might appear to make it an unessential element in the new covenant and therefore without any consistency or logic he brings in two other ideas. First he insists, in contradiction to the dismissal he has just given to the efficacy of ceremonial rites, that Jesus' death was in some vague sense a great ritual act or ceremony, in which he was priest as well as victim; and then he buttresses the necessity of his death by the somewhat irrelevant remark that a testator's will takes effect only on his death.

The safeguard against turning religion into theology and the adoration of a Saviour into the acceptance of a creed is resolutely to construe the passion of Jesus in connection with the situation he created by his life, and to see his Passion for what it was, action too.

His death may well be called a sacrifice if it is remembered that it was sacrifice in the Christian and modern sense of self-sacrifice. It was reality not symbol. It was passion, but it was also a spiritual experience, an action which achieved a result. Dying with faith in God and love

to men alike unbroken he established the truth of the New Covenant that rested on no symbol or rite or system of jurisprudence, but only on the gracious word of God.

It follows that the church went sadly astray when, haunted by the ghosts of ancient ideas about sacrificial ritual and symbol and by the craving to match in its services the magnificence of pagan worship, it began to make its Table also in some sense an altar. If the Cross has been an altar, there might be room for altars in Christian worship. A sacrifice that was ceremonial or symbolic might in some way be re-enacted for the renewal of its efficacy. But if the death of Jesus was sheer purposeful reality there is nothing in the Cross that can be perpetuated except its memory and its effect. The historic reality of the death of Jesus is recalled and dramatically represented at the Table. The power of his passion to bring assurance to faith and inspiration to life is communicated in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper.

NOTE

1. A similar interpretation is given by A. B. Macaulay, *The Death of Jesus* (1938), p. 144.

VII

THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

The Movement goes on.
The breach with Judaism.
A living Church.
The adoration of Jesus.

THE result of Jesus' life and death has been the emergence of Christianity as the one universal spiritual religion for mankind. The realisation of this development and its implications did not come immediately, is not indeed complete yet: which means that the movement for which Jesus lived and died is still going on. The transition from Judaism to Christianity which was accomplished in the New Testament period laid the foundations of a Church which was to be a world community. But the Church itself in time readmitted ideas and practices that were exclusive, and became concerned in maintaining an existing community rather than in extending the range of its community to make it all embracing. As far as the Church fails to carry on the movement it dies. Only a universal religion or one on the way to being universal can hope to maintain itself now. Hence the appeal to the Church from all quarters to realise that in loyalty to the spirit of Jesus it must keep bent on the creation of a universal fellowship. Failing this, no return to ancient tribalism will long hold the field. The end will rather be in a new scientific atheism.

In its beginning the Church did not take the full measure of what Jesus had done. Prevailing ideas and turns of speech obscured the pure spirituality of his conception and his universalism was difficult to detach from its Jewish matrix. Yet it is remarkable that the followers of Jesus did not more quickly perceive that the movement had been placed upon a new footing. So little did the death of Jesus appear to the disciples as a climax that opened a breach with conservative Judaism and pointed

toward a world-wide and wholly spiritual religion that they were content to resume the preaching of the kingdom on the old lines. In view of the fact that at his trial Jesus had formally claimed Messiahship they did indeed declare that Jesus the crucified had been the promised Messiah of his nation. But at first there was no fresh stress on the universality of their message such as had been given by Jesus when he sent out disciples to preach, two by two to the number of seventy, the traditional number of the Gentile nations, and when, in defending the act of the woman who broke her alabaster box, and poured all the precious perfume on his head, he said that the story of her act would be told "wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world." The first preaching is unconscious that any conflict of principle has arisen between their message and that of national Judaism. There seems rather to be a desire to disarm hostility by the scrupulous observance of the law. And the authorities were, to begin with, willing to regard their persistent proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah as a harmless absurdity that might be allowed to die a natural death.

The breach came when the Christian preaching found its natural home in the synagogue of the Greek-speaking Jews, where wider views and sympathies existed. A crisis quickly arose when its gospel began to take the form of a drastic declaration of the supremacy of the missionary ideal over legalism. The eloquence of Stephen revealed to the startled Pharisees that this preaching was going to reinforce the universalist and missionary tendencies in Judaism. The persecution of Christians, however, that was at once begun in Jerusalem ignored the Apostles.

For it was Stephen alone who had grasped and proclaimed the bearing of Jesus' Messiahship upon the future of Judaism. He was accused of speaking words against the Holy Place and against the law, and of saying that Jesus would change the customs that Moses had delivered. The charge was true. Stephen was the first clear-eyed Christian. The disciples' assertion that Jesus was Messiah had left the Jews on the whole indifferent. But the whole aspect of the matter was changed in the light of Stephen's teaching. He paid for his vision and his boldness with life. His martyrdom may be said to mark the place at which the majority in Judaism refused to accept the next stage in the development of their faith and its culmination in Christianity.

Stephen's successor was Paul, who looking to the Cross asked if there was anything national or racial or legalistic in the suffering and sorrow and love there revealed. Is the God who was with Jesus in his agony "the God of Jews only? Nay verily of the Gentiles also." And "In Christ," he says, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian Scythian, bond nor free." In reaching this understanding of itself the Christian movement became the fulfilment of the ancient hope of Israel, and gathered to itself the liberal and progressive and missionary elements in Judaism. All the older ideas about the wider extension or diffusion of a national religion were seen to be narrow and illusory. The kingdom of God does not widen, it abolishes frontiers. The only reference Jesus makes to the technique of proselytising is scornful. Jesus came that he might be Lord not of triumphal Judaism, but of humanity. Christianity felt itself to be missionary Judaism inspired by the fact that Messiah had come and

that he had extended the covenant of grace to all men and guaranteed it by his death upon the Cross. It was no unfair stratagem that Paul, wherever he went, asked leave to preach in the synagogue. He sincerely believed that he was not bringing a rival religion, but rather the crowning touch to the Jewish faith. Missionary Jews like Apollos and John's disciples were hailed by Christian preachers as brothers. The extent of the Church of the Jewish Dispersion shows that there must have been many other Jewish preachers of this kind. What happened to Apollos was what happened generally in the relation between Christianity and Jewish universalism. It was not an alliance, it was a realisation that they were one movement but with the Spirit of Jesus now in control, and Jesus as its Lord. The narrower section of Judaism was left high and dry. As Christianity, the liberal and spiritual movement in religion went on its way.

It still goes on, seeking to win men from sectional loyalties, from rituals and conventions as foolish as any in the ancient world, and to bind them together in one community, in a personal allegiance to God the heavenly Father. Where, at least, the Church is a movement, a propaganda, where it is conscious that its triumph is bound up with the rejection of racialism and of class distinctions and the end of pride and degradation; where it is aware that until its triumph is won it must be revolutionary and not conservative, where the language of its preaching and its creeds and the expression of its devotion is vital and fluid, continuously readjusted like all living things to changing realities, the Church is living by the spirit of Jesus and continuing his work. As Oman

says, "there are no finalities of creed or conduct or organisation."

But where the doctrine is expressed in the terminology of ancient philosophy and its worship is swathed in the ceremonies of antiquated ritual, and where it is content to remain outside of the movement of life and thought, the Church has lost touch with reality, and with Jesus. The Christian Church inherited the Hebrew conception of the living God, the Lord of armies in whose action men can put faith. It had as its most precious new possession the uncharted vistas of Jesus' teaching. Its first theologian laid down the doctrine of the freedom of the spirit. Yet the Church has always found it difficult to realise that its actual faith is expressed rather in the fresh poetry of its ever-welling fountain of praise than in frozen formulas, and that the proper bias of the Church is revolutionary and spontaneous rather than to be conservative and traditional.

Another defect is that far too little stress has been laid on the realism of Jesus and his concern for the conditions of life in this world. Christianity believes the purpose of God to be that mankind should form one community dwelling together in brotherhood and equality and freedom. At Christmas-time this is to some extent recognised. Inspired by carols and hymns people are friendly and liberal. But how far it is from being accepted that this realistic kind of Christianity is the only genuine kind. The Church is easily flurried by a heresy case, or proposals for a basis of union, or by the playing of games on Sundays—this, curiously, more than by Sunday labour—and yet on the whole its membership has

little depth of emotion about the squalor of people at home, the hunger of people abroad, the ignorance and destitution of millions in a world of light and abundance, matters that would agitate real Christianity. The words in the Book of Amos are still very much to the point, "I hate, I despise your feast days, I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. I will not hear the melody of your viols. But let judgment roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream." Barbara Pataleewa in her book, *I Am a Woman from Russia*, says about England, "It was much imbued with a narrow and selfish materialism, but nowhere else did I hear so much talk about spiritual things." In a world where men hunger and suffer, a religion which exhausts itself in such talk is not real. It pushes God out of the world He has made, and so it is more a kind of atheism than a kind of religion. That most deadly criticism of the creeds of the Church is that they have not felt it needful to include anything about the life of the community. The criterion of genuine Christianity is whether it hopes and works for the social order which is the purpose of God for mankind in this world here and now; for brotherhood in the enjoyment of the good things of life, and equality of opportunity, and the freedom of each person to lead his own spiritual life. Faith involves action. The final test of religion is reality.

The emergence of Christianity also meant the enthronement of Jesus. Men who believed that through him the Divine mercy had been disclosed, and assured to them, and offered to mankind, found their hearts moved to passionate and adoring gratitude. Jesus made

them sure of the God he called Father, and so all that he had been and done was God's doing. If men praised him it was the due recognition of the fact that God had given unto him a name "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." The proclamation of the Risen Jesus was never made as the story of an independent fact, but always as part of the Christian estimate of Jesus as the Son of God, one to trust and adore.

This estimate is no exaggeration of the thought and feeling of anyone whose faith rests on Jesus. No answer to the challenge that meets men who encounter his arresting figure has any arguable claim to be adequate except the answer the Church has tried to give in its thought and worship, in its obedience and praise. If that answer is found to be in terms foreign to modern thought or unreal to present-day imagination or too rigid for a world grown more conscious of change the Church must demand the help of newer philosophy to give a worthy answer in the language of to-day. It must also insist that the critical test of the truth of any philosophy or view of the world is whether it can furnish a vocabulary adequate to describe the majesty and authority of him who said "Come unto me and . . . ye shall find rest unto your souls."

One word that the Christian Church has always used to describe the attitude of Christians to their Lord is "love." It is taken for granted in a sentence in Peter that runs, "whom having not seen, ye love." Love cannot be forced. But the apostle thinks it is so inevitable a reac-

tion of Christian hearts to Jesus that though he is writing to a Church of which he probably knew little more than that it existed he assumes in it love for their Lord.

It was natural for him to do this, for when he looked back on the life of Jesus he could recall the passionate personal devotion he aroused. What attracted the disciples had been the magnetism of the Master. When Garibaldi enlisted a thousand young Italians to liberate Sicily, or when intrepid explorers have invited companions to join in a dash for the Pole, it was for programmes that were definite. But Jesus put no plain scheme forward. They were to follow him, whatever that might mean or come to mean, to listen to him, to watch him, to take some share in his labour of preaching. What was clear was the fascination of the Teacher, the radiant love that drew their hearts, and one by one at a word, they left their own plans and careers and possessions. Those who heard

*"Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord"*

were moved by love.

This flame lights up the Gospel story again and again. There was the woman whose name is graciously left unrecorded "for she was a sinner" whose tears fell like rain on the feet of him who had forgiven her while in utter gratitude she wiped them with the hairs of her head. There was loyal yet despairing Thomas who saw doom impending and felt that life would not be worth living without Jesus. "Let us go with him," he exclaimed, "that we may also die with him." And they all went. There was Mary who broke her alabaster box and poured its

costly treasure over his head in a wild wasteful glorious tribute of devotion. And even though his readers have no such imperishable recollections as his own of Jesus' eyes or the tones of his voice or any of the gracious ways that had won and held him, Peter takes it for granted that in their hearts too Jesus has kindled the fire of love.

The love of one unseen is not a queer mystery confined to the sphere of religion. It is one of the common facts in all hearts that are alive to the undying appeal of goodness and genius and grace. It is one of the strong, living realities of human experience. Men are capable when it comes to hero-worship, of leaping over the gulf of time and space. R. L. Stevenson was loved in his day by hosts of admirers who had never seen him, and men still feel towards him a sort of affection. In the ancient Greek world the poet Euripides drew the hearts of his readers: one of them is reported to have exclaimed that if only he were certain of a future life he'd hang himself to see Euripides. Swinburne wrote of Mary Queen of Scots:

*"Love hangs like light about your name
As music round the shell."*

The average Scot still regards "Robbie Burns" with glowing affection and pride. Gertrude Bell, the intrepid traveller in the Middle East, tells in one of her letters of an account given her by a Mohammedan sage of an interview he had had with an American missionary. He had sought information concerning Christ in the mood of a learned inquirer, but, he said, "he answered me with the speech of a lover." There may have been something in this complaint, yet in the ultimate analysis it was

illfounded. Something is lacking in any religion that has no kindling passion. There is more in Jesus than can be understood if the heart stays cold. If any man gives the room in his mind that ought to be given to what he knows of Jesus Christ love is bound to come.

Love has been felt for writers who have bared their souls in words of beauty and power. Must one not love him who said, "Consider the lilies how they grow," and "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me." Above all there is his own forgiving love flowing out even to his tormentors in the last hours of pain. To have the assurance of forgiveness coming through Jesus who died upon the Cross must surely unlock the gates to a great tide of emotion. And the response of love carries with it the desire to show it and prove it in some action. Thus Jesus becomes the Lord of all good life.

VIII

THE NEWER PHILOSOPHY AND
THE APPROACH TO JESUS

1. The modern approach must be by the categories of modern philosophy.

Traditional dogma tends to ignore the distinction between reality and truth.

Experience sets the limit within which propositions can claim to deal with reality, but in this experience is included experience of the revelation of God.

Unless thus scrutinised, the claims of dogmatic theology will prejudice historical investigation,

as the theory of sacrifice has obscured the meaning of Jesus' death,

and theological presuppositions have made the presentation of Jesus dramatic rather than historical.

2. The new interpretation of reality as change.

Biblical ideas of the living God and of the Spirit are impeded by the Platonic tradition.

The new nineteenth-century interest in the historical Jesus lacked the support of stimulus of a new philosophy. Modern philosophy encourages the attempt to give a dynamic rather than a dramatic interpretation of Jesus.

3. Chance is an elemental factor in the universe.

It is implied in the idea of a purpose.

The reluctance to admit chance in connection with Jesus.

The frank testimony of the Gospels that it was present.

4. The key to the understanding of the actual life of Jesus is his function in the spiritual movement in his time.

BECAUSE of the place Jesus occupies in the sphere of religion, any account of his life is bound to have theological implications, and since his life like any other is related to the totality of change and chance and reality an account of his personality to be satisfying requires the basis of a philosophy which gives an adequate and coherent interpretation of these elements of experience. It may be that no such philosophy is conceivable and therefore no reading of his life that will have perpetual validity. But at least one can discard the language of philosophies that are outmoded. Philosophies dating before the evolutionary and dialectical outlook, the Marxian emphasis on the material, the implications of modern mathematical theory and ideas of relativity, and the new explorations of psychology, cannot provide the ideas and terminology for the best approximation possible to-day to a true account of anything. The defect of much dogmatic theology is not that it is false, but that it is fossilised. One criticism of orthodox dogma is not that it is untrue but that it is dead, and there is no longer any interest either in its vindication or refutation. The modern mind uses different terms and does not ask the same questions, and even if its most positive assertion may sometimes seem to be "Behold I show you a mystery," there is more living faith in that assertion than in the rehearsal of orthodox answers to traditional conundrums.

1. *Reality and Truth*

One feature of modern thought is a sense of the importance of the distinction between "reality" and "truth"

as descriptions of the content of a statement. The question "Is it true?" is not the same question as whether the reference is to some reality of experience, and the notions of truth and reality do not coincide. A mathematical formula which is the purest form of unassailable truth does not constitute a real event nor may the mind be able to conceive any concrete reality it might describe. On the other hand, an entirely untrue accusation may constitute a real slander assessable in heavy damages. As is often pointed out, the truth that there is one law for rich and poor does not describe the actual fact that its operative cost often bars a poor man from its benefits. Again a myth, for all its faery structure, may express the essence of some reality better than a scientific explanation.

Now, theological dogma professes to satisfy both tests. It is true as a coherent and adequate statement, and it refers to actuality. The first claim need not be contested. For philosophic theologians after centuries of speculation may well have raised some structure with an architectural coherence and magnificence comparable to mathematical achievements. But the other claim, that it all refers to actual facts or events or processes, is dubious. For it is not to be assumed that every statement about God, whether true or false, at least deals with reality. It may quite well deal with some logical or metaphysical speculation about deity as completely abstracted as any mathematics from concrete experience. The dogma "God is Love" escapes this reproach when it is closely joined to history and experience by the words "Herein is love, that he laid down his life for us," and "Hereby know we love because he first loved us." But

if the statement of the Shorter Catechism that God is unchangeable be taken as more than a witness to the experience of men of faith, that God is always loving, faithful and just, and is regarded as a doctrine of the immutability of God in general, there is no point of view from which men can make any observations that would give the term a real content. Nor has man any experience by which to describe or imagine a process of manufacture or propagation which might be indicated as the creation of the world out of nothing. The dogma of creation has no meaning as a description of a past act of God. Any reference in it to reality depends on taking it as an assertion of religious experience that the universe depends utterly on God. Theology has indeed embarked on occasion upon speculations it quite realised to be no more than pious intellectual exercises, such as the famous discussion of the question whether the incarnation would have taken place had man not sinned. The modern distaste for the futility of such abstract theorising is accompanied by the demand that all dogma should pass the test of having reference to what is within actual experience.

An analogy to the limit thus set for dogma is found in the impact of the motion of relativity on the old ideas of infinite space. It seems to be accepted now that the universe has some definite measurable size—even though experts may differ as to the figure and even the method of working out the sum. The absence of a boundary is not the same thing as an infinity of space, all it means is that there is no way of getting nearer to a boundary by going in one direction rather than another. If one says that without infinity there must be an edge, and what

then is beyond, the mathematician replies that properly examined, there is no physical meaning that can be given as that of an "edge" to the universe, and no sense in which "beyond" can be understood.

Of course, to say that dogma is thus restricted to the sphere of human experience by no means makes man the measure of all things; for the human experience with which theology can deal is experience of the revelation of God. God is not outside this experience, but within it and as a creative participant. Religion is the relation of one spirit to another, human and Divine. In contemplating the religious life of man, theology is at the same time looking at the operations of God. This experience in which God and man take part together is obviously the only part of Divine life accessible to man. God is known as He reveals Himself. In humility and reverence the pious man inclines to say there must be far more to know, even though at the same time he will acknowledge gratefully that enough is revealed to occupy his adoring mind. But there is no actual point of view from which either pious man or ambitious thinker can put meaning into an assertion that there is more to know about God than He has revealed.

This criticism of the claims of Dogma is necessary for any modern study of the life of Jesus; for unless it is admitted, dogmatic theology will continue to prejudice historical investigation. It is indeed a familiar fact that orthodox believers are often pained or shocked by any dwelling upon such facts in the gospel tradition as the limits to Jesus' knowledge, or his surprise, or his human emotions. Two particular examples of the effect of theological doctrine upon the consideration of the psycho-

logical realities involved may be given. One has already been referred to in connection with the attempt to give a just appreciation of the meaning for religion of the death of Jesus. Because it had to do with forgiveness the vocabulary of Jewish religion offered for it the term "sacrifice." But, as has been said, the Cross was not an altar, his death was no ceremony. Indeed, ever since it was applied to Jesus, the word "sacrifice," except when used in connection with ancient religions, has meant self-sacrifice, a real act; a patriot may wave a flag as a symbol of his patriotism, but when he gives his life for his country it is no symbolic act, but the full reality of his devotion. Calvary was no symbol of love: it was love in action, its essence, its reality, its measure. Yet under the influence of traditional doctrine some Christian people still think to find clues to the deeper understanding of what the death of Jesus was to himself and to mankind in the labyrinthian intricacies and impenetrable obscurities of the symbolism of the Hebrew sacrificial system. One of the latest instances is the more surprising because it comes in a volume deserving the most profound respect, Dr. Manson's *Jesus The Messiah*. Through the mass of the literary evidence he makes his way with supreme confidence, never embarrassed, never discontented, perhaps never greatly excited,

*"with unhurrying chase
and unperturbed pace"*

and inevitably he arrives at the problem of relating the Messianic vocation of Jesus to his death. Needless to say, he is reverently aware that here he comes to the heart of the Christian faith, and after careful approach he offers

this statement as the kernel of the truth. "The self-dedication implied in the ransomword and in the covenant-word in the synoptic tradition is sacrificial in its character. Jesus identified himself with (sinful men) to the extent of making his soul an '*asham*' for them."

How can this be taken seriously? Jesus stood in the line of the Hebrew prophets and poets who had spoken once and again of the futility of bloody sacrifices. He showed no concern with the temple cultus, using no breath either to explain or denounce it. It is psychologically conceivable that in facing a death he obviously did not seek, though he foresaw that it would come upon him as he trod the path of duty, Jesus found it illumined with meaning by seeing in it a parallelism with the Hebrew '*asham*'. Surely Jesus became what he is for the world not by working out in a perfect form the cryptic symbolism of Levitical ritual in which Jewish cultus was bogged, but by making religion real and spiritual, personal and universal and leaving the modes and problems of Jewish thought behind.

Another example is within the New Testament. The Fourth Gospel prefaces the account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet by the words, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he was come from God and went to God." The design is, by reminding the reader of the doctrine of Christ's person given in the prologue to the Gospel, to heighten the effect of the example of humility which follows. It may do this. But, on the other hand, the implication that this conception of his own personality was in the mind of Jesus as he stooped to serve may be felt to reduce the human charm and spontaneous grace of the act to a

dramatic display. This is indeed a consideration that applies to the Fourth Gospel as a whole. While the prologue is not a piece of philosophy that the writer had in his mind before he thought about Jesus, but is the result of that thinking, it is offered as a scheme of thought which in view of familiar ideas and in current terms satisfies his own mind and may help his readers. But it would be unjust to the writer to assume that he sets the same value on this theological formulation as on the facts that impelled him to attempt it, or that he imagined he was giving final form to a creed, or would have resented another statement by one with a differently furnished mind. What the historian may feel to be for him the main importance of the prologue is that it puts him on his guard to watch if the doctrine by its reflex influence may have coloured the presentation of the narrative.

Though the Fourth Gospel specially emphasises the theological frame which its portrait of Jesus occupies, no absolute contrast can be drawn in this regard between it and the other Gospels. There is no approach to Jesus in the New Testament which is bare of theological assumptions or uncoloured by theological conclusions. All the evidence about the life of Jesus comes from men who had believed in God before they knew him, and had then given Jesus a place in their religion which made them say "Jesus is Lord." It is undeniable that the possibility is always present that presuppositions may colour facts and conclusions reinforce presuppositions and thus lead to further influence on the apprehension and narration of the facts. A philosophy held will always affect the apprehension and description of reality. This is as true in modern as in ancient theology and it means that each

generation can claim truth only for an interpretation of reality that is expressed in the ideas and terminology of its own day.

2. *Reality and Change*

If one mark of modern philosophy is its insistence on the reference to the realities of experience, another is its perception that reality is movement and change. If revelation is historical it is in the real action of history.

Among the scanty records of the earliest philosophic speculation in Greece is found the saying of Heraclitus "everything flows." Competent scholars believe that this was not just another guess at the fundamental unity of Nature, to put beside those guesses that everything was compounded of water or of fire but was rather the statement of a fresh approach to the problem. When Heraclitus said, "all is fluid, nothing stays put," it was an assertion that the reality in Nature is change and that the interpretation of reality is not in terms of static substance but in terms of force, movement, dynamic energy.

For Socrates the philosophic interest was in ethics rather than in natural science, and he and his follower Plato made no use of that earlier clue. For him the ultimate and authoritative reality is the Idea, the absolute Form existing in eternal perfection. Things and events are but shadowy pictures of the unchanging ideal. And until quite recent times the Platonic conception of absolute static perfection as the basis of reality and the goal of life has largely dominated philosophic and religious thought.

Rhys Davies says that Buddhism has never held that the real is necessarily the permanent. Bertrand Russell

asks modern philosophy to concede no less. For the modern interest in scientific speculation has led to a return to an approach like that of Heraclitus. It challenges philosophy to integrate itself with the developments of scientific knowledge, and the ideas of evolution and of relativity. The scientific point of view is, according to C. H. Waddington, that the typical thing one must expect to find in Nature is not something like a stone which apparently stays the same for ever but something like a flame or an animal. In philosophy it is dialectical materialism which contains the seed of future speculation. That system takes as a key to the interpretation of all organic processes the Hegelian logic of dialectic, the advance through contradiction to a larger synthesis, the principle that being is becoming; while at the same time it rejects the Hegelian identification of reality and idea in favour of the principle that thought and things have their unity in the supreme reality of action; that a thing is what it does; that theory and practice are the same—truth that has its religious expression in the New Testament dictum “faith without works is dead . . . I will show Thee my faith by my works.” In this way dialectical materialism has made equally impossible a return either to idealism or to determinism in philosophy and has also exposed the futility of utopian dreaming in politics. To recognise that dialectical materialism has given a decisive turn to speculation is not, of course, to claim that it has said any final word; indeed, its own essence is to disclaim finality and, as Macmurray points out, it ought, if consistent, to be quite hospitable to the suggestion that there are super-organic elements in reality which lie outside the range of its dialectic. But it does

seem certain that the philosophy of the future, even if it be a Christian philosophy will derive as much from Marx or Lenin as from Plato and that if the creeds of the Church are ever written again it will be in new terms and with a new modesty about their permanent value.

The Platonic tradition had almost from the beginning so strong a hold on Christian thought that the formulation of dogma diverted the interest of theology from the actual career of Jesus. The creeds that were intended perfectly to describe his glory and establish his authority instead threw a veil over the revelation he had made by living his life. There is no mention in them of "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach," or of the Christian way of love and brotherhood. Jesus was regarded as the necessary substructure of the creeds instead of the creeds being like lanterns throwing rays of light upon the figure of Jesus. The interest in the Gospels came to be in those features which most obviously supported the dogmatic scheme rather than in other elements for which it was more difficult to find accommodation.

It is true that the nineteenth century felt a new impulse to interest itself in the historical Jesus. A hundred years ago the Higher Criticism came like a breath of fresh air through the opened windows of a stuffy room. The person of Jesus was disentangled from the wrappings of dogma and viewed from another angle than that of conventional piety. The Church was taught to look at its Lord as he walked in Galilee and to listen to the human accents in his voice as he called on men to be good and to be free. But liberty seems a dangerous thing. And as the Roman Church at the time of the Reformation feared to let Everyman read the Bible for himself, the Church in

more recent times has often feared to let the letter of Scripture and of the creeds be set aside in favour of so undefinable and uncrystallised a conception as the liberty of the Spirit. The "fundamentalist" reaction, professing orthodoxy, amounts to a recoil from the historical Jesus, and a rejection of the scriptural teaching about the Holy Spirit. The Barthian movement too, for all its genuine desire to recover the sense of awe and wonder in religion, proceeds rather by attempts to galvanise into a semblance of vitality catchwords belonging to a dead vocabulary, than by a fresh consideration of the career and teaching of Jesus. It is indeed an arguable proposition that there is more praise of the real Jesus in the graceful, witty, cynical, yet admiring pages of Renan's *Vie* than in all the turgid rhetoric of Barthian adoration. After every reconsideration of formulas that have been composed to define the exact shape or hue of the theological halo with which Jesus should be crowned it is a relief to recall his own words when children cheered him: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."

While theological activity, out of touch with modern philosophy and science, was turning down these blind alleys, the critical movement was unfortunately losing its earlier impulse to proceed to a positive construction and adopting a defeatist attitude to the problems it had raised. No biography of Jesus, it has been argued, is possible, because the material for it does not exist. According to one critic, "it is not too much to say that there will never be a trustworthy life of Jesus Christ." Another speaks of the "extreme difficulty of constructing an unambiguous and convincing portrait of the historical

Christ." For one thing, the Jews had not the modern sense that "the child is father of the man," and the Gospel silence about the childhood of Jesus is like their silence about the early days of their great prophets and Rabbis. Then as far as the Gospels are comparable to diaries or reminiscences, one who wishes to display their information in chronological or psychological order is continually baffled by omissions and apparent contradictions and the absence of clear indications of time. And when a would-be biographer has in view questions as to how the mind of Jesus grew and his mission developed, it is precarious to extract answers to them from material furnished by people who asked no such questions but were simply anxious to report what the Lord they worshipped had on some occasion said or done. The latest criticism called "form criticism" has thrown fresh uncertainty over the problem by urging that the Gospels are collections of material shaped into its present form and grown familiar and dear by long use in teaching and preaching; so that what is presented is edifying illustrations rather than history, propaganda and not sober truth. Indeed, New Testament scholars have become remarkably unconcerned with the total result of the detailed analysis of the gospels, leaving it to the dogmatic theologian to make do as best he can with such fragments of tradition as they stamp with some very provisional warranty. It is this situation which leaves the way open to the Buchmanite propaganda which cuts out the Christian approach to God in favour of the mystic notion of direct God-control, and avoids the need of any allusion at all to Jesus Christ.

If, as can hardly be questioned, the nineteenth-century interest in the historical Jesus has waned, one reason may be that there was no adequate philosophy to sustain it. If there is now a new philosophy that like Heraclitus and modern scientists interprets reality as change and development, one result should be to sustain a fresh approach to Jesus of Nazareth as a man in the movement of his time, and critical scholarship should be encouraged to return to its task. Some sketch at least of his life, exhibiting the main lines along which his personality grew and functioned in history is really a necessity of thought for anyone who takes account of Jesus at all. The new philosophic outlook with its emphasis on reality and action must encourage fresh interest in the reality that claims to be the vehicle of Divine revelation—namely, the human life of Jesus of Nazareth. And as modern thought takes the essence of reality to be dynamic rather than static—regarding even substance not as something always there independently of time, but rather as something going on in time like a tune—the interest will be in the life of Jesus, not as a display of ideas or personality, but as a career. He threw himself into an existing situation. He gave a dynamic impulse to a movement which he discerned to contain or be capable of containing all that is vital in religion. Though the issue was not fought out in his lifetime, nor immediately recognised to have been decided by his death, yet by the way he enriched and deepened it, by the contribution of his own insight and personality and ultimately by his death he secured its eventual triumph. As a young man Jesus lived in the middle of a religious movement that involved funda-

mental and far-reaching issues. Any biography of him who has so affected history must be a study of Jesus in the movement of his time.

The objection to much Christology is that it makes Jesus a figure in drama instead of in history. The creeds dramatise Jesus and when a character is dramatised it is crystallised, defined, made unalterable. For most people, for example, Julius Cæsar means the hero of Shakespeare's tragedy. This conception of Cæsar is permanent. No corroboration or contradiction by later historical research will ever affect it. No one thinks of bringing Shakespeare's Cæsar up to date. The student of literature, whether he be philosopher, psychologist or moralist, deals with the immortal Roman depicted once for all in the play. But the biographer in contrast to the dramatist can never hope to pronounce a final word. Not only do new facts and facets disclose themselves, but also new biographers have been carried by the movement of life and thought to new points of view with fresh angles of vision. And there will never come a time when fresh developments in the historical process may not yield fresh insight into what was involved in events of the distant past. As long as new history is being lived old history will require to be re-written. The Scripture saying, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and forever," may be interpreted to mean, not only that what he is known once to have been he still is, but also that what he is now known to be enables the comprehension of what he once was. No final life of Jesus is conceivable, for the same reason that no final life of any historical character is attainable. Finality could attach only to a dramatic rather than a realistic presentation of Christ.

3. *Reality and Chance*

Those who find in Jesus the fullest revelation of the purposes of God have been apt to think that this belief implies that his life was a prearranged programme not subject to ordinary contingencies and was not like other lives, an exploring of possibilities, and an improvisation of thought and action suited to the occasion. It is therefore needful to insist that a sense of the ultimate significance of his life is no reason for ignoring in it the element of chance.

It is congruous with the latest scientific research to accept chance as an elemental factor in the universe. A lump of radium, for example, emits rays or particles at a quite definitely known rate, but about an atom of radium nothing has been discovered to show whether it is likely to explode in an instant or in a thousand years. The rate which science measures for the lump is just the average of millions of infinitesimal haphazard events. The exactitude of science is that of the actuary who deals with mass statistics although the real events to which they refer happen by chance. If science discloses a casual factor involved in the reality with which it deals, it need not be surprising if chance is an element in history and personal life. "Chance," says Berdyaev in his book, *Spirit and Reality*, "is a tremendous factor in human destiny." The task of the Spirit is to infuse it with purpose. Purpose, indeed, far from being incompatible with chance, presupposes the reality of chance; only if events are haphazard can there occur that arbitrary interference and interaction with the stream of casual occurrences which constitutes purpose. Purpose is essen-

tially the will to impose some order or aim upon chaos. It is realised only in action, and it takes one whose own will is in some way involved to discern purpose. Purpose in the universe has indeed to be felt rather than proved; it can be sensed only by being shared or opposed.

A common exhortation is to "play the game." In Bridge the condition for a game is a deal from a shuffled pack of cards. The purpose of the players expresses itself in the playing of the hands that have by sheer chance fallen to them. A preliminary haphazard lie of the cards is necessary if tricks are to be triumphantly taken. It is the same in the common process of assembling separate parts to make a mass-produced unit. If exactly fitting parts come along the conveyor belt, no room is left for purpose in putting them together. The operator's task is purely mechanical. But because casual imperfections and variations may and do occur, and demand a certain amount of fitting or adjustment, there is a measure of scope for purpose in the worker. It is the element of chance that makes purpose possible. Also it is the worker's awareness of some arbitrary activity of his own that lets him appreciate the fact that chance was encountered and overcome in the manufacture of the parts.

The endeavour to eliminate the factor of chance in the life of Jesus, or to minimise it, is therefore as pointless as it has been persistent. To say that when Jesus was born the stage was set for this entry, that when a certain point in the programme of history was reached the supreme hero emerged and took up his role, is to turn history into drama, and redemption into revelation. And it is to ignore the fact that the stage had been so set for four

hundred years without anything special happening; and that there was no defined role for him to take up, for so far from fulfilling expectations Jesus revolutionised and combined contradictory expectations.

Philosophic historians have embarked on proofs that at the beginning of the Christian era occurred a unique conjunction of circumstances favourable to a world-wide mission, so that just in the year A.D. 1, and at no other time in the range of history, could a Saviour of the world have so suitably appeared. They thus imply that they are in a position to perceive that any earlier date would have been premature, and that it would have been a Divine mistake to wait for the attractive possibilities of the periods following the invention of printing or the establishment of world communications by steam and telegraph, or of the inauguration of broadcasting. These generalisations of historians are more eloquent than convincing. Sir John Seeley, for example, says in the first chapter of *Ecce Homo*, "Not Judea only but the whole Roman Empire was in a condition singularly favourable to the reception of a doctrine and an organisation such as that of the Christian Church. The drama of ancient society has been played out. A vast peace, where war had been the accustomed condition, called for a new morality. There was a clear stage, as it afterwards appeared, for a universal Church." Renan too writes of "The great era of peace." But, on the other hand, Klausner's description of Palestine in the period from 67 B.C. to A.D. 39 is: "Scarcely a year went by without wars or other disturbances. Wars, rebellions, outbreaks, riots, and all of them with their concomitant of incessant bloodshed; and this state of affairs prevailed in the land of Israel throughout

the whole epoch which preceded Jesus, and prevailed also in his lifetime." During Jesus' earlier years Galilee was, he says, "a boiling cauldron of rebels, malcontents, and ardent 'seekers after God.' Disease and destitution, widowed and bereaved women, orphaned children, and forsaken fields—all these abounded in consequence of wars and rebellions." For another contrast, take T. R. Glover's statement: "A general peace prevailed through the Roman world, a peace that was new to mankind. There was freedom of intercourse; one of the points made by the writers of the Roman Empire is of this new freedom to travel. Piracy on the sea and brigandage on the land had been put down." Put beside this the contemporary evidence of the Apostle Paul: "Thrice I suffered shipwreck; in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness—in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned."

Besides the supposed peace and safety of that period the new range of a common language has been dwelt upon as suggesting Divine arrangement as to the date of Jesus' birth. Strauss makes the epigrammatic exclamation, "Had there been no Alexander, there would have been no Christ!" Angus, too, in *The Environment of Early Christianity*, stresses the opening of the world to propaganda in this era through the spread of the Greek language. But as he takes as "the new era" a period of six hundred years, from 300 B.C. to A.D. 300 and puts its culmination at about A.D. 200, any inference that the year One was precisely appropriate for the beginning of

Christianity would be not unlike an assertion that the Scots Reformation had its natural place half way in an "era" extending from Bannockburn to Waterloo.

It is indeed difficult to assess either the truth or the relevance of wide generalisations about eras or ages. The choice seems open between Matthew Arnold's familiar quatrain about the Roman world where—

Made human life a hell."
"Deep weariness and sated lust

and Dill's eloquent pages describing the same period as "an age of preaching, of eager missionary effort, an age when philosophies and religions brought consolation and strength to noble as well as to credulous minds." The plain fact is that, even if true enough, such generalisations may yet have very little application to the circumstances of a particular person or event. The Roman world may have been at peace in a large sense, but when the boy Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem with his parents rows of crosses with their grim foul burdens were a familiar spectacle by the roadside. And the diffusion of the Greek language may have had little importance for one who thought and taught in Aramaic.

A reason for questioning such philosophical interpretations of the place of Jesus in the course of history is that they encourage people to come to the record of his life with a disinclination to accept the element of chance in it. For instance, reflection on the fact that Jesus, by working as a carpenter till he was thirty years of age, has proved the dignity of labour, is sometimes made to amount to a theory that there lies the explanation of his delayed entrance upon a wider vocation; as if the fact

that he happened to be tied like many another to home responsibilities was not enough, or as if it is unsuitable to suppose that he began by meaning to be a carpenter and was one until the sense of having another contribution to make to his generation grew upon him. Again, was it something in John's attitude towards him that was the occasion of his new self-dedication? Professor J. A. Robertson writes, "When he saw the mighty prophet shrink back, and in subdued tremulous and downcast tones declare, 'I have need to be baptised of thee,' the veil fell from his eyes. This was the crucial moment of Jesus' discovery and acceptance of his Divine vocation." But there is a much simpler statement in the Gospels about the call to Jesus and his answer. "After that John was cast into prison Jesus began to preach and teach." One was down. Who would take his place? The entry of Jesus was quietly heroic and determined by the occasion. Even if his previous searching of soul and consciousness of vocation had been as Dr. Robertson suggests, he waited for the chance that made the way of duty clear. Another instance is Denney's comment on the text in John, "he must needs pass through Samaria." He says that a Divine necessity is there hinted at. Why not be content with the plain meaning that Samaria happened to lie on his route?

It should hardly be needful to add that the recognition of the element of chance does not involve regarding it as the only factor in producing a situation. Every human situation arises also out of the previous history and thoughts and purposes and feelings of those concerned in it, and the issue depends much upon the insight with which these other factors are appreciated. But the fact

remains that the Gospel narratives state as clearly as words can the spontaneous freedom and casual abundance of Jesus' activity, such that, in the witty phrase of the Syro-Phœnician woman, great deeds were to him no more than crumbs from a table. At one time, Luke says, Jesus entered into a synagogue and taught, this being obviously his purpose: But it so happened that a man with a withered hand was there, and a difficult situation develops in regard to Sabbath-day healing, and it is tackled. He sees Zaccheus peer down from a sycamore tree to watch him pass, and on the impulse Jesus invites himself to be Zaccheus' guest. Many a profound and memorable saying is a comment on a sudden emergency, or an unexpected question. And though at the end it is evident that Jesus felt doom impending, according to Mark the fatal moment comes as a surprise. His words to his drowsy companions, "Sleep on now," are hardly spoken when noise is heard and the plan for quiet rest in the open is changed to the alarm call, "Rise, let us be going," when it was all too late to escape the stealthy foe. No human life can follow an exact programme. The biographer may apply to his own task H. A. L. Fisher's confession as a historian: "One intellectual excitement has been denied me. Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a pre-determined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave . . . only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognise in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen." Jesus lived in what George MacDonald calls "the holiness of the eternal now," making life one

long impromptu, improvising victory over every difficulty as he answered every questioner, and found a remedy for every bane.

Indeed, it is not only the sense of reality that is lost, but all contact with the original sources of information, if a picture of Jesus fails to give the impression that he was constantly feeling his way, receiving new light and inspiration through prayer, and from the fountains of divine love within his being. The responsiveness of Galilean peasants led him to use his gift of picturesque statement and popular appeal. The falling away of the multitudes made him become the trainer of the twelve. The opposition in Jerusalem moved him to challenge ecclesiastical worldliness in its stronghold. Like other men, he made chance his opportunity. Genius is an inadequate word for the faculty by which he combined serenity of mind and precision in action with the elements of exploration and effort and experiment that characterise human activity. Jesus seemed to be always sure of the next step, and to have that poise of soul that is content to see one step ahead.

In this perishing world full of the uncertainties and mysteries of chance the art of life is not the art of taking root but the art of swimming in deep waters. Yet even so a life may have its guiding motives and dominant aims. Towering in the foreground of Jesus' environment was the figure of the great John, the prophet of the liberal movement in Judaism. Colouring all his thought was the sacred literature over which he brooded. For Jesus the Book he loved and the hero he admired combined to nourish in him the resolution to dedicate his life to bringing to its perfect flowering the religion that

had been revealed to his race and was meant for all mankind.

By scanning the Gospels with all the apparatus of modern scholarship, critics have hoped to be able to present a picture and estimate of Jesus as he really was in Palestine. The project has been abandoned too readily in a defeatist temper by many who know its difficulty, and their surrender has been hailed as a sign of grace by Neo-Calvinist enthusiasts who claim to come into closest touch with the living Lord through the traditional worship and orthodox dogma of the Church.

But the historian as well as the dogmatist can take heart from the Scripture word, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and forever." Every fact about the course of his life on earth, everything real in the experience of his fellowship, whether gathered by historical study, or philosophic reflection, or in the religious life of individuals or the Christian community, is to be integrated into one conception of his personality. On this high doctrine of the Saviour it must be true that he did the same for men in Galilee that he does for men to-day. His function does not change though it is part of the the reality that changes continually. The spiritual movement of mankind goes on. What concerns historian, philosopher and simple Christian is the place and activity of Jesus in this movement. The picture and estimate of Jesus as he really was in Palestine must come by a study of his function in the movement of his time. The portrayal of the actual life of Jesus must be undertaken to-day in the light of modern philosophical categories, and in particular the relation of Reality to Truth and Change and Chance must be kept in view.

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